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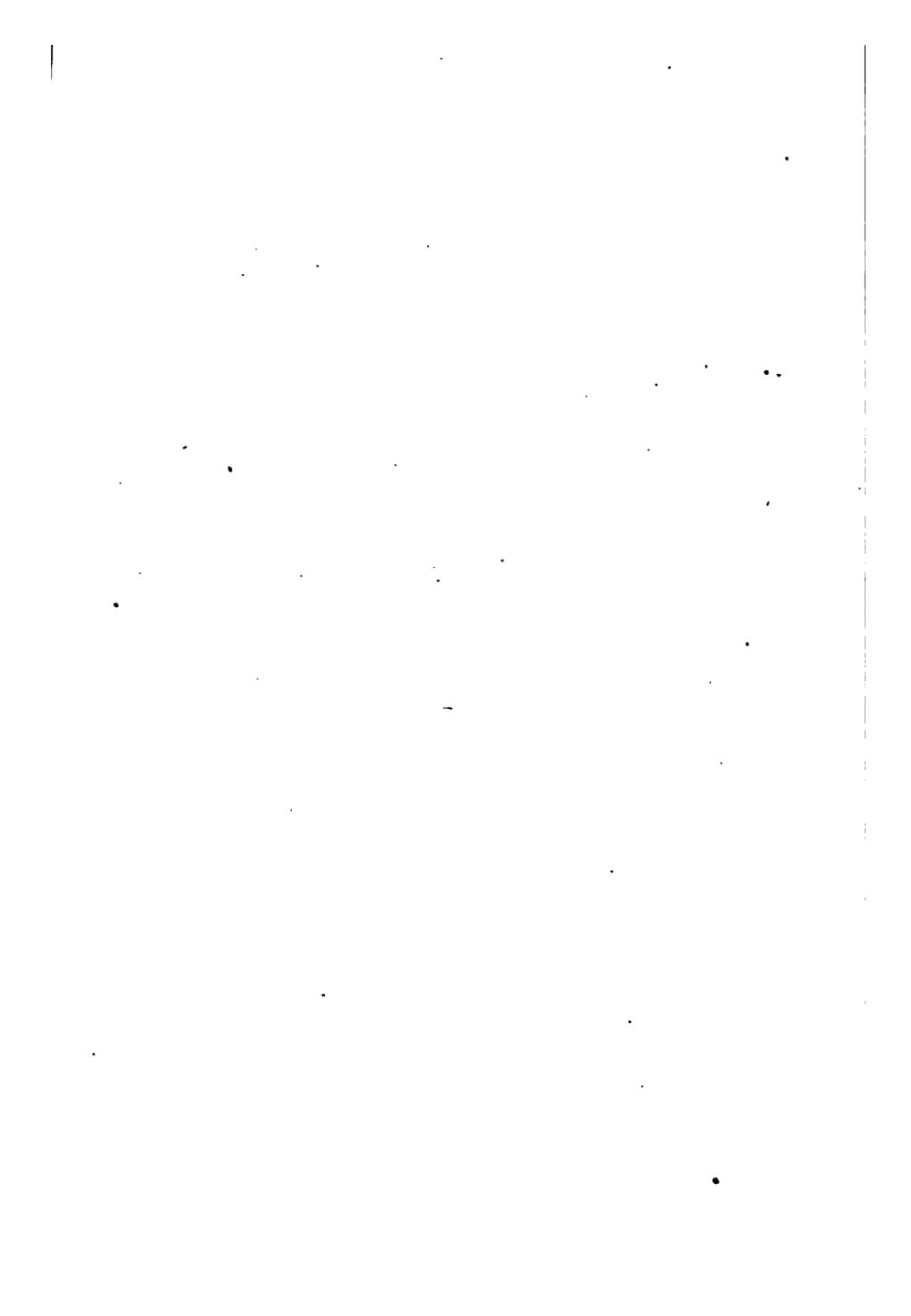
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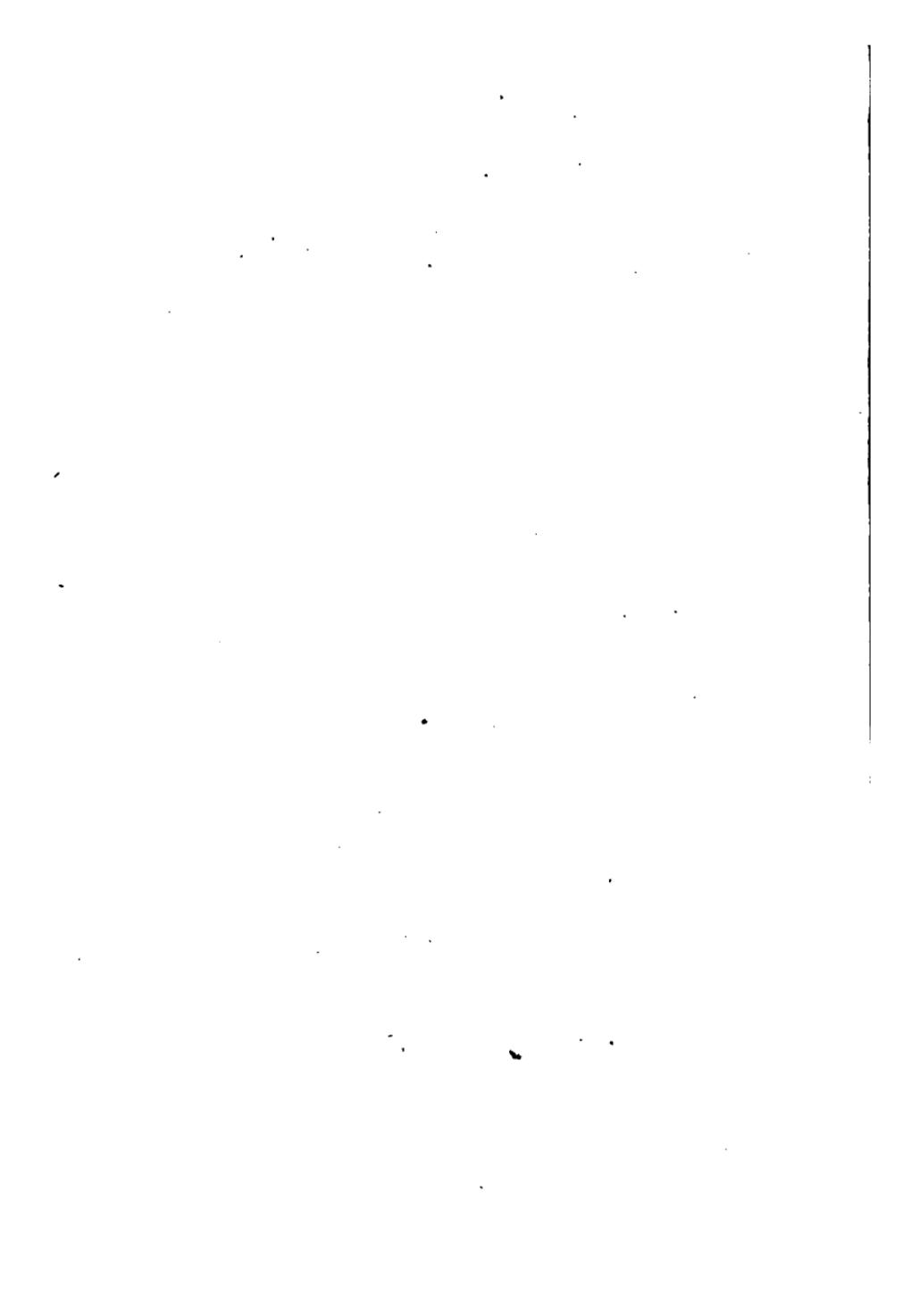
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'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.'

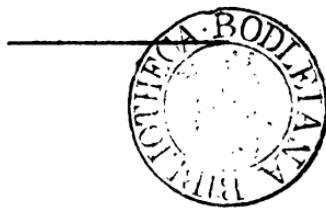


'I WILL SING
OF THE MERCIES OF THE LORD;'

OR,

An Exposition of the 89th Psalm.

BY THE
REV. JAMES BARDSLEY, M.A.
RECTOR OF ST. ANN'S, MANCHESTER,
AND HONORARY CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL IN THAT CITY.



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To the Memory of

THE LATE

ROBERT GLADSTONE, Esq.

HIGHFIELD, MANCHESTER,

WHO

(AT THE SUGGESTION OF A NEAR RELATIVE WHO HEARD THE
SUBSTANCE OF THE FOLLOWING EXPOSITIONS)

REPEATEDLY ASKED THE AUTHOR TO PUBLISH THE SAME,

This small Volume is Inscribed

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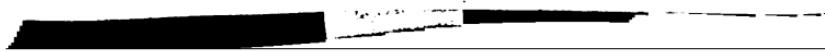
AND ABOUNDING KINDNESS

WITH WHICH HE ASSISTED THE WRITER IN ALL HIS UNDERTAKINGS,

DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE REDEEMER'S KINGDOM,

ESPECIALLY IN CONNECTION WITH

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



PREFACE.

FIFTEEN or sixteen years ago, I delivered the substance of these pages in a series of sermons to my beloved flock at St. Ann's. Many and oft-repeated requests have been made to me that I would publish the same, but stress of work prevented my doing so. Since, however, God in His all-wise providence, has laid me aside from active duties in His sanctuary, I have employed some of my leisure moments in compiling this volume, which I now offer to my congregation and the public generally, with the sincere prayer that it may be the means of strengthening and confirming their faith in our common Lord. I have not attempted so close and elaborate a style as otherwise might have seemed necessary,

as the book is intended to be devotional and not critical.

Should these pages prove in any degree a means of edification, comfort, or blessing, the writer will only be too thankful, and will accord the glory and praise to Him whose mercies have followed him all his life long.

THE
EIGHTY-NINTH PSALM.

VERSES 1, 2.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

THE *burden* of the song. The *feelings* with which the Psalmist regards it. Mercy is another modification of goodness; it is goodness exercised towards wretched, sinful, undeserving objects. The holy angels have experienced God's goodness; they were created by His power, and filled with joy from His countenance; but as they have never sinned, they have never tasted of His mercy. But while the angels in heaven have never needed

mercy, and the fallen angels have been excluded from it, mercy has been manifested towards the rebellious and sinful creature man. Yea, whilst the golden vessel has been broken, and is now without hope, the earthen vessel, man, has been rescued from his fall, and used to exhibit the mercy of God. Christ leaving His Father's glory and enduring the punishment due to man's transgressions, expressed the heinousness of sin and the holiness of God's nature with more terrible emphasis than if the whole family of man had been consigned to eternal perdition. If God pardon sin, it is in a manner becoming Himself, 'He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all.' 'The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all.' 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief.' 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd.' The mediatorial work of Christ opens the way through which mercy can be consistently bestowed upon man—God can now be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

But we remark that mercy is not only the most lovely, but also the chief attribute of God. There is not a drop of comfort, or a ray of hope for a sinner, but what flows to us in the channel of covenanted love. It is very noteworthy that the word is used in the plural number,—'mercies ;' sometimes even 'multitude of mercies ;' and generally we shall find in Holy Scripture some prefix

before mercies, to indicate their character, and set them off to advantage ; there are ‘loving mercies,’ ‘great mercies,’ ‘tender mercies,’ ‘abundant mercies,’ ‘tried mercies,’ and ‘sure mercies.’ They extend through all space, they last through all eternity. As high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him ; and just as the canopy of heaven covers the highest mountains as well as the lowest vales, so the mercy of God covers the greatest sins as well as the smallest offences. So though countless numbers in every age and nation have experienced God’s mercy, it is still unexhausted. No wonder, then, that anyone who has experienced this mercy, should have the feelings of the author of this psalm, and should say, ‘I will sing of the mercy of the Lord.’

It was not merely mercy revealed, but mercy received ; not merely mercy made known in a book, but felt in the heart. This mercy had delivered him from the fear of hell, and raised him to the hope of heaven, therefore we wonder not that his feelings of gratitude found expression in songs of thanksgiving. When David could say, ‘He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings,—when Isaiah received God’s assurance, ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins’—it is no marvel that their next words should be, ‘He hath

put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.' 'Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it!'

Have we come to Christ, and urged this petition, 'O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me?' Do we constantly offer up this petition? Do we, under a deep sense of our utter unworthiness, say like David, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me?' It is encouraging to read, 'He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' Nay, God's mercy has a message even to the mere worldlings who have been attempting to slake their souls' thirst at the polluted and poisonous springs of earthly delights. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;' and even the most wicked are assured that if they will forsake their evil ways and unrighteous thoughts, the Lord will have mercy even upon them, and will abundantly pardon.

Mercy is the *chiefest*, as well as the most lovely, of all divine attributes. When proclaiming His name before Moses, God says, 'The Lord merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' He employs six distinct words to set forth His mercy, and only one to set forth His justice. In this passage, as well as in the second commandment, while God

asserts of Himself that He is jealous, that He will visit the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him,—He says also that ‘He will show mercy unto thousands in them that love him ;’ in other words, mercy will be exercised towards successive generations to the end of time. Even when the last of God’s elect children has been gathered into His fold, mercy will be in existence ; it will last longer than it is wanted. Twenty-six times over does one psalm repeat that ‘His mercy endureth for ever.’ Judgment is said to be ‘His strange work,’ it is that to which He is unaccustomed, that to which He is disinclined, while, on the other hand, ‘He delighteth in mercy,’ this is agreeable to Him, with this He naturally falls in ; He is more frequently represented in His Word as clothed in the white robe of mercy, than as arrayed in the garb of justice ; the vial of His wrath drops, while the fountain of His mercy runs. If, therefore, the quality of God’s mercy be not strained, what must be the consequences to those who systematically abuse it ? When mercy becomes the accuser, who then can be our advocate ? When He who is the Saviour assumes the office of the Judge, who is there to plead anything in arrest of judgment ? If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. If the Father be angry with us, His wrath

may be deprecated by the Lord Jesus, who is said to deliver us from the wrath of God ; but who can deliver us from the wrath of the Lamb ? ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’ What an emphasis this gives to the exhortation, ‘Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little !’ But, concludes the Psalmist, in a grave sentence comparing the condition of the godly with that of the wicked, ‘Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.’

VERSES 3, 4.

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I
have sworn unto David my servant, thy
seed will I establish for ever, and set up
thy throne to all generations.

LET us consider with whom the covenant was made. ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen.’ The meaning of the word is ‘beloved,’ and we feel while reading the words that one greater than the king of Israel is intended. This is not only suggested by the passage, but is sustained by Scripture analogy. David is called God’s chosen, because

He chose him to be king of Israel, and rejected Saul; because he was raised from the sheepfold to feed his people Israel. God made a covenant with His chosen, and sware unto David His servant. A covenant is, as we know, an agreement between two or more parties, with conditions to be performed by each. The conditions which God guaranteed to David were, 'Thy seed will I establish for ever, and set up thy throne to all generations.' In the inspired record given of this covenant (2 Sam. vii. 12-16), we read, 'I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish thy kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men; but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.' If this only mean that God would give David a son to sit on his throne, to build him a house—to continue a dynasty—we must then believe this language to be figurative, and not referring to our Lord; but that it is not merely figurative is proved by the words of St. Peter, when he refers to David's words in the 16th psalm, 'I foresaw the Lord always before my

face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved : therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope : because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' He then adds, 'Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.' Here St. Peter distinctly declares that in the promise made to David that he should have a son to succeed him in the kingdom, he knew as a prophet that there was contained a larger promise that Christ should be raised up to sit on his throne. This is an undeniably instance of a passage with a double interpretation. The literal meaning of the promise has its accomplishment in the birth of Solomon ; but we see from inspired authority that a greater than Solomon is here. This view is further confirmed by St. Paul, when showing the superiority of Christ to angels, he applies that part of God's promise to David, 'I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son,' to the relation in which Christ stands to the Father as His eternal

Son. Pursuing this last meaning of the promise further, we feel undoubtedly there must be an analogy between the type and the antitype. Solomon ascends the throne of his father David, Christ ascends the throne of our hearts ; there He wields His sceptre, there he reigns by His Spirit, softening the temper, controlling the passions, subjugating the will, purifying the thoughts, elevating the affections, and bringing down every imagination to the obedience of Christ. But surely in no sense can this be called David's throne. The prophet Isaiah declares of the Wonderful Counsellor that 'the government shall be upon His shoulder,' 'upon the throne of David.' The language of the angel to Mary, before the Incarnation of our Saviour, is still more pointed and precise, 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' That Mary should conceive and bear a son, and call his name Jesus, all parties allow to be literal ; I do not see then by what canon of interpretation the remaining part of the passage can be fairly interpreted otherwise. It would seem from the tenor of Scripture that Jesus was to inherit something which He did not receive while He was on

earth. Instead of sitting on the throne of David, He was despised and rejected by His own nation. Still, Jesus is the King of the Jews, and the time will come when He will take to Himself His great power, and reign, when His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Four hundred and fifty years after the death of David, Ezekiel speaks of the Messiah under his name, 'I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David ; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.' (Ezek. xxxiv. 23.) This again the prophet repeats. There is no truth which is more patent upon the face of Holy Scripture than that the Father and the eternal Son are the contracting parties in the everlasting covenant of grace. Christ, on behalf of man, and not man himself, is the Mediator of the new covenant—the better covenant established on better promises. 'The covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ.' This glorious truth is repeated in every variety of language. It is not a dry, speculative subject in theology, whether the covenant was made between God and man, or between God and Christ; but it is a great practical truth and blessed doctrine. It is the rock on which our salvation is built, and the fountain from which our consolation must flow. If the covenant is made between God and man, that faith and repentance are to be performed by the

latter as conditions of salvation, then this is only another way of teaching justification by works. This would make salvation to the sinner a work of his own ; whereas it is evident that he can no more possess faith and repentance of himself than he can raise water from a well with a shattered vessel. Salvation is his, not by the conditions of the covenant, but by the blessings of the covenant. What saith the Scripture, ‘Behold, the days come, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.’ This is the nature of it : ‘I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts ;’ here is faith, repentance, infallibly secured as God’s gift ; ‘And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people,’ here is adoption into the family of heaven conferred as a matter of sovereign favour ; ‘And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest ;’ here is knowledge freely implanted. But is this all ? Nay, the very core of the promise follows, ‘I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.’ This is to sin-burdened souls, as the summer shower is to the parched ground ; it is inexpressible comfort to feel our standing in Christ, to see Jesus as our Daysman ; to be able to say with David, ‘He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.’ The

promise made to the Messiah under the name of David is, 'Thy seed will I establish for ever.' 'He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' The Father hath said to Christ in the councils of eternity, 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' 'A seed shall serve him; it shall be counted to the Lord for a generation.' The Father's faithfulness is pledged to His Son that all this spiritual seed shall be preserved to everlasting life, 'My mercy will I keep for him for ever.' The truth here expressed is, that if one of this precious seed perish either through their own wilfulness, or through the wiles of the devil, then Christ has died in vain. But the Psalmist goes on to say, 'With my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness.' When we say God is faithful, we mean that He will surely perform His promises.

God has not only consulted our safety, but also our comfort, for He has given us exceeding great and precious promises, which shine on the pages of Scripture as the stars glitter on the face of the sky on a dark night, to cheer the bewildered traveller. They are divine in their origin, abundant in their number, suitable in their nature, clear in their expression, sweet in their experience, and sure in their fulfilment. When Jacob was journeying to Padan-

aram solitary and alone, he said, ‘ If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace ; then shall the Lord be my God.’ Oh, what a response must these words have found in his heart twenty years afterwards, ‘ I am the God of Bethel ! ’ The emotions which thrilled through his breast when he looked upon the moss-grown pillar and recollect ed all God’s faithfulness to him, found expression in those touching words, ‘ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant.’ When Joshua had accompanied the Israelites forty years in the wilderness, and had brought them into the promised land ; reviewing the circuitous way by which God had led them, the great emergencies into which they had been brought, the various vicissitudes through which they had passed, he could yet at the end of their journey appeal to the whole nation with entire confidence. ‘ Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth ; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.’ Surely, when by God’s mercy His people have been enabled to pass many a deep river, strengthened to climb many a lofty mountain, sheltered from many a violent

The Eighty-ninth Psalm.

storm, rescued from many a threatening peril, they feel compelled to exclaim, 'O Lord, open thou our lips, and our mouth shall shew forth thy praise ;' 'With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.' It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, but it is with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation.

There is a short and rapid passage between the heart and the mouth ; it is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ; our words, as a rule, are a reflection of our state of mind. When the tap is turned, the liquid which flows will be that which the vessel contains. We know the nature of the metal by the ring which it gives, so our words must partake of the state of our minds. It is our words which declare our character, and determine our destiny ; for the great Teacher asserted, ' By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' If, therefore, gratitude for God's mercy, and trust in His faithfulness, predominate in our hearts, we shall sing and give thanks. Articulate and intelligent speech is the exclusive prerogative of man, and should therefore be religiously devoted to God's service ; therewith should we bless God. We should not use this great gift to exalt self, much less to profane the name of the Giver, but on account of His goodness and majesty, should employ it in His service with a deep and earnest devotion.

VERSE 5.

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders,
O Lord : thy faithfulness also in the
congregation of the saints.

WHEN the Psalmist says the heavens shall praise, he does not mean the heavenly bodies which are scattered through the illimitable regions of space, but rather the beings who inhabit heaven. This view is taken by Bishop Horne, and other commentators, and seems confirmed by the context, 'Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of saints.' The inhabitants of heaven do not praise God so much for the wisdom, power, and goodness displayed in creating, as for the wondrous mercy exhibited by Him in redeeming man. Thus we find when the Son of Man, who is the Ancient of Days, became the creature of a day—when He who was in the council of God, made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant—there was with the angel who brought the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host, who made the vault of heaven re-echo with ecstatic praises. When Jesus had finished the work which His Father had given Him to do, when He had

made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness, and went back to His Father to take possession of His throne, He did not go alone; but just as a victorious general, returning from battle, is met by his friends, who go out to receive him, and escort him into his native place, so the angels come forth to conduct Jesus to His native habitation. When He left His disciples on the Mount of Olives, He did not ascend alone; the air through which He passed was peopled with celestial beings, and filled with celestial melody. A part of the cherubic host who had been deputed to escort Him into the heavenly city, sang, and said, ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.’ And others within the city asked, ‘Who is the King of Glory?’ The answer was, ‘The Lord Jehovah in human nature, returning victorious over sin, death, and Satan; the Lord strong and mighty, Creator of angels, and Redeemer of sinful man; He is the King of Glory.’ Nor is it on particular occasions only, that the inhabitants of heaven praise Jesus; it is their perpetual employment. St. John withdraws the curtain which veils the invisible world from our view; and tells us that they cease not day and night to praise Him. Are we learning the language of Canaan? We are sometimes summoned in the Church below to take part with the heavenly host in praising Jesus.

'Worthy the Lamb that died, they cry,
To be exalted thus !'

O my readers, what is the response produced in our souls? Can we truly say :—

'Worthy the Lamb, our lips reply,
For He was slain for us !'

As the heavenly host praise God's wonders in providence and grace, so the congregation of the saints praise His faithfulness. They have been changed from sinners into saints, and have exchanged the servitude of sin for the service of God; they have been pardoned and converted and taught to praise Him for all His benefits.

There are few words of more frequent use, either in the Old or New Testament, than the word 'saints.' 'Fear the Lord, all ye His saints,' 'Let the saints be joyful with glory,' 'Let the congregation of saints praise Him,' are some among many exhortations employed by the Psalmist. St. Paul addresses his Epistles, 'To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints ;' 'Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints ;' 'To the saints which are at Ephesus ;' 'To all the saints which are at Philippi ;' 'To the saints and faithful brethren which are at Colosse.' When the same apostle would describe constituent parts of a Christian Church, he speaks of their

faith in Christ Jesus, and their love to all the saints.

They are made saints, not by a human invention, but by a divine institution. They have not to wait until, according to an old pagan custom, they are made saints by canonization after their death, but they are saints whilst living ; for all whose bodies are made temples of the Holy Ghost, and whose hearts are purified by faith, form the congregation of saints, the blessed company of all faithful people. And as all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus are saints upon earth, so the saints in heaven are not a few persons who, after the fashion of the old Gentile idolatry, have been elevated after death to the rank of sub-mediators, but are those who through the mediation of Christ have been made at one with God, and have been clad in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, who, while on earth, were by His Spirit separated from the world and adopted into His Father's family. They consist of all who die in the Lord, and sleep in Jesus ; for these are they whom the apostle declares God will bring with Him, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

VERSE 7.

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly
of the saints, and to be had in reverence
of all them that are about him.

DAVID here designates bodies of persons who meet for worship, assemblies of saints. This he can only do when speaking of them with regard to their profession, and this is the habit of the sacred writers. When God complains of Israel as a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, He still calls them 'My people,'—'Israel doth not know ; my people doth not consider.' Instances of the same kind pervade the writings of the prophets. St. Paul speaks in the same way. He addresses the Corinthians, for example, as 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints ;' these expressions he applies not merely to true Christians, but to the whole baptized body. When we recollect the sad picture he draws of the Corinthian Church, we cannot understand this language, but as addressed to the whole body of professing Christians at Corinth ; for while he calls them 'brethren' and 'dearly beloved,' he rebukes them for great sins and disorders, and speaks of 'many which have sinned already, and have not repented.' This view is further confirmed by his language to the Galatians,

'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ;' they had all been baptized, and therefore had, in some sense, put on Christ; yet he complains that they were removed into another gospel, and had turned again to the weak and beggarly elements of legal observances. When the apostle spoke to professing Christians as a body, it was his habit to speak of them as though they were (as Bishop Bradford has it) what their profession required them to be; but when he speaks of them, not in their corporate capacity, but in their individual character, he hesitates not to reprove them for their sins and to warn them against temptation.

Our public forms of devotion are framed on this principle. They are intended for professedly Christian people, and cannot be otherwise. You cannot draw up forms of prayer for any but those who profess to worship God. This is a point to be peremptorily insisted upon in the present day, when we have the extravagant notion put forth by the Plymouth Brethren,—certain well-meaning Christians,—that they will worship with none but real saints. This is very desirable, but how are they to know them? Would they have worshipped with the Apostles? One of them had a devil, yet our Lord, knowing this, put the same form of prayer into the mouth of all, 'Our Father,' &c. This fact is most significant, and full of instruction.

St. Paul never forbids the admission of unbelievers to Christian assemblies, but only inculcates that they shall receive full instruction. If those alluded to would confine their mission to an effort to convert sinners, instead of endeavouring to pervert serious members of Christian Churches, who have more warmth than wisdom, they would follow our Lord's direction to go out into the highways, and gather in to the marriage-feast both bad and good. They have already proved, by the deplorable division among themselves, and by their fierce denunciations of each other, that even in their field tares may grow as well as wheat.

VERSES 6, 9, 10.

For who in the heaven can be compared unto
the Lord ? who among the sons of the
mighty can be likened unto the Lord ?
Thou rulest the raging of the sea : when
the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one
that is slain ; thou hast scattered thine
enemies with thy strong arm.

IT was because Lucifer aspired to climb up to the throne of God that he was deposed from his ori-

ginal dignity, and is now reserved for the judgment of the great day. The highest archangel who worships in the presence of God is but a creature, and acts as a servant. 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.' He stands in a waiting attitude to do God's bidding, hearkening to the voice of His word. There was a time when Jehovah existed alone: when, from motives originating in His own eternal mind, He called into existence the universe, with various orders of intelligent beings, 'Who directed the Spirit of the Lord?' As God did not in the work of creation seek advice from angels, neither did He seek their assistance. It is the highest happiness of the inhabitants of heaven to cast their crowns at the feet of Him to Whom they cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.' And as there is none in heaven, so is there none among the sons of the mighty that can be likened unto the Lord.

When we see some men exalted to high office, exercising an almost unbounded influence over vast masses of their fellow-creatures, seeming to hold in their hands the destinies of kingdoms, we are tempted to say of them, 'Ye are gods;' but a little more careful reflection brings us to the conclusion, 'Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.' We cast our eyes down the course of time, and see the Sennacheribs, the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Charlemagnes, who have risen to

great eminence, and wielded great influence: but what is left of all their greatness? The very monuments which speak of their exploits are mouldering in the dust! Change is stamped on everything here; dynasties change, the courses of events change, the surface of the globe changes;—one Being alone can say, 'I change not.' In Him 'is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' The glory of the divine perfection is eternity, in which the past, the present, and the future, are swallowed up and lost. Yet it is the happiness of the Christian to reflect that He who is 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' is his God and Saviour, and to Him is applied by an inspired apostle the sublime language of David, 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.' How consolatory it is to believe that He, 'Who died for us and rose again,' and 'Who is now at the right hand of God, making intercession for us,' holds in His hands the reins of universal government, making all things subservient to His will, and ruling over the inhabitants of the earth, so that 'none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?'

The 9th verse brings God before us in the works of His hands, rather than in the revelation of His mind. How often in His word are we invited to contemplate the character of God as displayed in His works! The most magnificent object we have in creation is the sea: there is nothing which so strikingly displays the omnipotence of God and the impotency of man, the glory of the Creator, and the helplessness of the creature. How often does God's word declare, 'The sea is His, and He made it!' He excavated the cavern in which it is contained, He strengthened the fountains of the deep, He marked it out with a compass, He shut it up with doors and wrapped it in bands, He hath given it bounds that it shall not pass over. It is majestic in a state of repose because of its vast extent, its unfathomable depth, its slumbering strength;—but who shall describe its awful grandeur in a storm? 'They who go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.' 'He holds the winds in his fists, and measures the waters in the hollow of his hand;' He says to the sea, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.' 'The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is

mightier.' Consequently, those whose business calls them to cross the tempestuous ocean are not cast out of His sight ; though their stately ship be tossed as a mere toy by the mighty billows, though skill and science fail in the terrible conflict, though their soul be melted because of trouble,—when they cry to the Lord He will hear them. When He gives the command to the howling tempest, 'Peace, be still,' there is a great calm ; 'so He bringeth them to their desired haven.'

There is another view of this subject suggested by God's word.

The waters of the stormy ocean afford an apt figure of the troubles and temptations to which God's people are exposed. In the eighteenth psalm David says, 'The floods of ungodly men made me afraid ;' and here in this passage there is an undoubted reference to the opposition of the enemy ; for after saying, 'Thou rulest the raging of the sea, thou stillest the waves thereof when they arise,' the sacred penman continues, 'Thou hast broken Rahab (*i. e.* Egypt) in pieces, as one that was slain ; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.' When Israel was shut in between the Red Sea in front, and Pharaoh with his hosts behind, all that the people had to do was to 'stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.' As for His own people, for their sakes 'He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up ; so He

led them through the depths as through a wilderness—while the waters covered their enemies : there was not one of them left.' Thus was God's Almighty power over the most terrible forces of nature, and over the cruel human foe, vindicated in one and the same act—the one employed to destroy the other. 'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.' No weapon formed against God's Church can prosper.

But sometimes God's people find themselves in trouble, which is the result of their own transgressions. So was it with David when, an outcast from his kingdom, driven from his throne, deprived of the means of grace, he wandered in the wilderness. Hear his bitter complaint then : 'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is now thy God ?' 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.' Now it is well known that Nathan foretold Absalom's rebellion as a punishment of David's sin in the matter of Bathsheba. Does not this explain those words, 'All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me ?' As when he left Jerusalem he said of Shimei, 'The Lord hath bidden him curse,' so now he sees God's hand in all the cruel deeds of the enemy ;—he receives it as God's correction. No wonder, then, that in the very next verse we meet with expectation of deli-

verance—‘Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.’ May the reader and the writer both recognise the hand of a covenant God in their afflictions, and there shall arise light in the darkness : each shall with David find himself able to say, ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.’

Once more ; the troubled sea is a striking emblem of the unruly wills and affections of our fallen nature. In Isaiah, lvii. 20, we read, ‘The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.’ Though it is true that the wicked are here spoken of, yet who that remembers that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, will hesitate to learn wisdom from the simile ? We know with what storms of ungodly lust the man after God’s own heart was well-nigh shipwrecked. We know that even saints have to be exhorted to ‘mortify their corrupt affections, which are upon the earth.’ We hear such a man as the apostle Paul crying out, ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ Let none of us be self-deceived : that would be the worst destruction of all. ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’

But while alive to the necessity of the conflict with evil, let us remember where our strength will be found. The Lord—He who sitteth upon the flood ; yea, the Lord, who sitteth King for ever, hath said, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’ True, this is a much more painful conflict than with any external foe. It is no less than fighting with our very selves. Victory may necessitate the cutting off a right hand, or the plucking out a right eye ; but it is worth it, and the grace to endure this, and the power to have victory, is from the same God,—a covenant-keeping God, ‘mighty to save,’ for ‘he ruleth the raging of the sea, he stilleth the waves thereof when they arise.’ ‘The Lord will give strength unto his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace.’

VERSES 11, 13.

The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine : as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. Thou hast a mighty arm : strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.

HE who made the heavens and the earth sustains them by His watchful care and His unerring

wisdom. Seas, lakes, and rivers yield their moisture to the heat of the sun ; these vapours on reaching the colder regions of the atmosphere are condensed into clouds, and at last fall again in refreshing showers upon the earth, making the valleys to laugh and sing. Hervey, Rector of Weston Favell, in his sermon on reconciliation, says, ‘The interchanges of night and day, the vicissitudes of the seasons, are God’s ministers, all sent on errands of kindness, and bringing the most precious gifts in their hands. The innumerable varieties of living creatures and of nutritious vegetables are the portion of man : not procured by his own industry, but settled upon him by his heavenly Father’s bounty.’

But God not only supplies man’s bodily wants, His providence interposes in all human affairs. God’s providence is as wide as the universe ; there is nothing so small as to be beneath its notice, nothing so mighty as to be able to cast off its control. We are told that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without our Father ; and yet before Him the nations are counted but as the small dust of the balance.

When Abimelech remonstrated against the conduct of Abraham, and said to God, ‘In the integrity of my heart have I done this ;’ in reply God said, ‘Yea, I know that thou didst this in the

integrity of thine heart ; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me.'

Naaman the Syrian was a mighty man of valour, and honourable with his master, and was doubtless popular with his countrymen ; but it was all 'because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria.' Cyrus was God's shepherd, to do all His pleasure, and He guided him, though he knew it not. If he were able to turn the river Euphrates, and to enter Babylon after a protracted siege, it was because 'God had opened the gates before him.' It was when Belshazzar was drinking wine with his lords from the sacred vessels of the Temple, that the handwriting appeared on the wall, 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting.' 'In that night,' says the sacred writer with significant brevity, 'was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.'

God's over-ruling providence is exemplified in more modern times in the case of Napoleon. Monarchies hoary in their antiquity disappeared at his approach, and dynasties cemented with the blood of centuries crumbled at his touch. He seemed to be raised up in a remarkable manner to execute God's purposes of judgment against those anti-Christian nations, who have given their strength to the Beast, and have so long opposed the circulation of God's Word. In these great

events, which have taken place before our eyes, we see illustrated in a manner not to be mistaken, that God does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

'The earth is the Lord's,' not only because He has made it and governs it, but also because He has bought it. The whole world, in some sense, is concerned in the death of Christ. 'He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man,' God loved the world and gave His only-begotten Son for it; therefore St. John says, 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, (who believe in Him) but also for the sins of the whole world.' He is therefore 'the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.' In whatever sense He is the Saviour of those who believe, He is in the same sense, to some extent, the Saviour of all mankind; therefore we read of some who deny 'the Lord that bought them.' The course of the Gospel has been more like the wanderings of a pilgrim than the triumphs of a conqueror. Satan is, at present, 'the god of *this* world,' but he is not the god of *the* world; it belongs to Christ, who has redeemed it, and the time will arrive when 'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Christ shall come to take His inheritance, and Satan shall be cast out, and 'the meek shall inherit the earth.' The saints

shall possess the kingdom, and Christ shall take to Himself His great power and shall reign.

Then if the earth be the Lord's, it follows that whatever we possess of it is under Him: we hold it as stewards, not as proprietors; it is *lent* to us, not *given*. We should, therefore, be careful to use everything we have as from Him; not appropriating anything to ourselves, as though it were our own. Christ, when He went away, distributed to His servants His goods; and though we may possess them, they are still His, to be expended in His service, and to be used for His glory. They are not to be wasted in promoting our own selfish ends, or in purchasing our own enjoyment; nor are they to be neglected through indolence, or carelessness. The Lord will require a strict account of every talent intrusted to us, and only those who have faithfully spent His treasures in His service will be permitted to enter into the joy of their Lord.

VERSE 14.

Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

IN Proverbs, xvi. 12, Solomon says, 'It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness; for the

throne is *established* by righteousness ;' and the margin explains that the idea is the same here : ' Justice and judgment are the *establishment* of thy throne.' With God might and right are never separated : His throne is secure not only because of His almighty power, but also because of His eternal justice ; ' The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' Judgment is the outcome of this. Because God is just, therefore He is a God of judgment ; *i.e.* He rules with justice over both friend and foe. True, God's justice has been impugned by the wicked, and worse still, at times, in the hour of temptation, doubted by those who ought to have known better : but one thing is certain, never from the first page of the Bible to the last does God abate His claim to this essential attribute of Deity. Could He for one moment cease to be just, absolutely just, perfectly just, He would cease to be God. To one who misunderstood God's silence He says, ' Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set these things that thou hast done in order before thy face.' When the house of Israel say, ' The way of the Lord is not equal,' His reply is, ' Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal ? Are not your ways unequal ?' (Ezek. xviii. 25.) ' O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after your ways.' (Ezek. xxxiii. 20.) Holy Asaph writes,

'As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped ; for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. When I thought to know this it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood I their end.' The fact that man cannot always see the justice of God's acts, is no evidence against their justice. 'Clouds and darkness are round about him,' but still 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' The cloud in which God chooses to hide Himself, while it shrouds His enemies in midnight gloom, and keeps them in utter ignorance of His ways, has a bright side for His people, and reveals enough of His intentions for their guidance, security, and peace. And yet it is to be remembered that the very light in which He dwells is so great that no man can approach unto it. (1 Tim. vi. 16.) Often all that can be said of them is, ' How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.' (Rom. xi. 33.) 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.' But of this we never doubt—the Judge of all the earth will do right ; 'The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre.' Nor are we under the Gospel to expect other than strict justice at God's hand. Paul preached to Felix of 'righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' He tells the Athenians that 'God has appointed a day in

which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained.' (Acts, xvii. 31.) He writes to the Corinthians, 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad' (2 Cor. v. 10); and he himself looking forward to the reward of the faithful servant, speaks of it as 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him.' (2 Tim. iv. 8.) Oh, then, what is to become of sinners? How sweet this next word, '*mercy!*' Mercy is no less one of God's attributes than justice. When Jehovah proclaimed His name before Moses, His words were, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) God never changes, and therefore this quality of mercy, which He here claims, must always have been His. But before His creatures sinned there was no room for its display, and when the first traces of it appeared in Eden, when fallen man had not only his life spared for a time, but deliverance promised him, then those holy beings, who knew well by experience the holiness and justice, the goodness and love of God, might naturally be astonished at this newly-discovered attribute of mercy; and accord-

ingly of the work of redemption, promised, but not yet explained to them, we read ‘which things the angels desire to look into.’ How God could be just and merciful—this was a problem they could not solve: it needed divine wisdom. Of Christ in whom it is worked out; we are told that in Him ‘are hid all the treasures of wisdom.’ My reader, it will be your wisdom to discard human wisdom on this subject, and to have recourse to the divine. ‘Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.’ Mercy is what you need, for you are a sinner; without mercy you must perish; but God must also be true to Himself, true to His character, and He is just as well as merciful. The Gospel provides for this very difficulty. Instead of evading it, it distinctly states that this is the problem to be solved—how a just God is to justify the ungodly. (Rom. iv. 5.) This subject will be more fully investigated under another verse. For the present, suffice it to say that the justification of the believer *may not, cannot*, be at the expense of God’s justice. To understand how this is secured, we must remember that in Adam all die; in him, the first head of our race, we all fell, and are all condemned; but in Christ, the second Adam—the second Head—the Head of the saved—‘shall all be made alive.’ (1 Cor. xv. 22.) ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’ (Rom. viii. 1.) ‘That I may be found in him (says St. Paul), not having

mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' (Phil. iii. 9.) His holiness, His obedience, His innocence, are what the Father looks at instead of His people's faults ; and thus only can it be true that ' He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob.' This is no man-contrived theology,—it is the distinct teaching of God's Word,—God's own way of showing mercy consistently with His eternal justice—His own plan for declaring His righteousness in the remission of sins. So He is true to His own character, ' Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.'

The word '*truth*' may also be applied to the certainty of the fulfilment of these precious promises. God's people have with one accord borne witness to His faithfulness. When bidden to offer up Isaac, Abraham did not for one moment doubt God's intention to keep His promise, though he could not possibly know how, if Isaac had died childless, that promise could be fulfilled. And as Abraham by his conduct testified to God's truth, so from their experience Joshua was able to call upon the Israelites to subscribe to the same unvarying attribute, ' Not one thing hath failed.' (Josh. xxiii. 14.) We may safely rely on every Gospel promise, simply because they are all God's promises. ' He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' (1 John, i. 9.) '*Just to forgive*', inasmuch as our Substitute

has satisfied for our offences, and pleased the Father with His holy obedient life ; ‘*faithful* to forgive,’ inasmuch as He has covenanted with this Surety of ours so to treat us ; and this covenant is ‘ordered in all things, and sure.’

There is another meaning of the word ‘*truth*’ in Scripture, which if not intended here, may yet help the reader to estimate aright the blessings of the covenant. To our senses nothing seems so real as the things we taste, and see, and hear, and handle ; and yet these, after all, are not the real things. The bread which we eat is the bread that perisheth. After tasting the water of the purest of earth’s fountains we thirst again. Gold and silver are but the unrighteous mammon, not the true riches. Our Father gives us the true Bread from heaven ; the Water which Christ gives, is in us ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ Heaven’s inheritance, not earth’s, is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. Jesus Christ is the True Vine, the True Shepherd ; *i.e.* the fulfilment of every type, and the real substance of which every earthly blessing is but the faint shadow. My reader, remember ‘He that findeth his life shall lose it ; and he that loseth his life for Christ’s sake shall find it.’ For what are you living ? Have you found the Pearl of great price ? Are you in possession of the true riches ? We believe that Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead.

Then justice and judgment will be shown to be the habitation of His throne. In love to us, that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming, He now sends before His face as pioneers, *mercy* and *truth*. ‘He that believeth shall not be ashamed.’

VERSE 15.

Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound : they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

THE reference to ‘the joyful sound’ is doubtless derived from the festivals under the law. God commanded Aaron to make trumpets* (not of rams’ horns, to give out harsh and discordant notes, but of silver, made after a peculiar fashion). These trumpets were blown at all the great feasts, but especially in the year of jubilee : then to those who had waxen poor, and had been compelled to part with their inheritance, or who had become servants to their neighbours, the blowing of the

* Tradition tells us that the trumpets used on this occasion, like those of the Feast of Trumpets or New Year, were of rams’ horns straight, and had their mouthpiece covered with gold. *Mishna Resh Ha Shana*, iii. 2 ; *Maimonides Hilchoth Shemita ve Jobel*, x. 11 ; Kitto’s *Cyclopaedia*, Art. *Jubilee*.

silver trumpet was indeed a joyful sound. For the jubilee cancelled all debts, hushed all litigations, released all prisoners, liberated all slaves, and restored all estates that had been sold. (See Lev. xxv. 8-55.) To this happy year the Scriptures frequently allude, and it was typical of the joy and peace of the Messiah's kingdom. Isaiah says, 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs :' and again, 'In that day shall the great trumpet be blown, and they shall come, who were ready to perish.' And also in the passage before us we read, 'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.'

It is a remarkable fact that at the beginning of our Saviour's ministry at Nazareth He applied to Himself the earlier part of the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, which speaks of good tidings for the poor, healing the broken-hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. To those who feel that they are bankrupt and ruined sinners these words are salvation. For this joyful sound tells the prisoner that he has become a prince, the slave that he has regained his freedom, and the debtor that his obligation is cancelled. One of our Christian poets has beautifully expressed this :—

'Ye who have sold for nought
The heritage above,
Receive it back unbought,
The gift of Jesus' love.
The year of Jubilee is come,
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home !'

Of course, it was only those Jews who had lost their estates and liberty, or were in servitude, who would welcome the sound of the jubilee trumpet. In like manner, it is only those who know that they are sinners, and are totally bankrupt, that will welcome the joyful sound of the Gospel. Now a person may know the joyful sound theoretically, but not experimentally, as was doubtless the case with many of the Jews who heard Jesus preach. They made their boast of God that they knew His will, and yet they were strangers to the saving knowledge of God ; and this is doubtless the case with many, very many in these days. It is remarked of Manasseh, after he came out of the furnace of affliction, 'Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.' As the son of good king Hezekiah, he must have received a godly education, and must, in a sense, have known God before ; but in the Scriptures a person is said not to know God, if he does not love God and walk according to his knowledge. And let it be borne in mind that the word of God without the Holy Spirit to shine upon it is as the dial without the sun. David prays in the 119th Psalm no less

than twenty times that God would give him understanding, that He might understand His word. The promise given is, ‘All thy children shall be taught of the Lord;’ and Jesus declares that ‘every one that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.’ These things are revealed to us by the Spirit, whose office it is to ‘take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us;’ so that if we have been led to confess Christ as the Son of God, and to trust in Him as such, ‘flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto us, but our Father which is in heaven.’ ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ Do any of my readers inquire, ‘How shall I obtain this knowledge?’ Let God Himself answer, ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.’ ‘Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.’

Now the great fact to be known and understood is this—that ‘Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,’ delivered us from the bondage of sin, and brought us into the ‘glorious liberty of the children of God.’ He has paid our debt and restored our forfeited inheritance, and by His Spirit He enables us to walk as those who are redeemed and sanctified. ‘For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,

and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh : that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.' This is the great central truth of Christianity, and is written as with a pen of light both in the Old and New Testament. 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength,' says Isaiah. 'This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness,' says Jeremiah. Daniel says of the Messiah that He should 'make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness.' St. Paul declares that Christ 'is made unto us wisdom and righteousness.' This he reiterates in every form of expression : 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous ;' 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth ;' 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Glorious truth ! Precious privilege ! What a cheering, consoling doctrine is this of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ ! It is a cordial for every fear, a supply in every strait, a succour in every difficulty, a support in every trial, a refuge in every emergency : in the agonies of the hour of death, and in the terrors of the day of judgment, it is the strength, rock, and support of the believer.

'Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.'

'They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance.' The allusion here is doubtless derived from the arrangements which existed within the Holy of Holies. The high-priest sprinkled the blood around and upon the mercy-seat. Over the mercy-seat the Shekinah, or divine glory, dwelt between the cherubim, and from this place God met with His people, and communed with them through the high-priest, according to His gracious promise, 'And there will I meet with thee, and will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony.' Hence God says, 'Seek ye my face,' which finds a ready echo in the hearts of His children, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' They value one gleam from the light of His countenance more than the accession of worldly wealth. While the votaries of pleasure, the slaves of business, the sons of science, and the possessors of power with their disappointed souls, are eagerly inquiring, 'Who will show us any good?' the petition of the believer is, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' Whenever God hides His face from His people, either on account of their sin or as a Sovereign,

they are said to walk in darkness. God does sometimes hide His face, and then it is with His people as with the plants which droop in the absence of the sun ; but He never leaves them too long. ‘For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.’ His presence illuminates their paths ; when they lie down they have the assurance that they are under His protection, and when they awake they are still with Him. This cheers them in every path of duty, in every trial of faith, and in every dispensation of providence : wherever they go, and in whatever situation they are placed, the light of God’s countenance shines upon them.

VERSE 16.

In thy name shall they rejoice all the day :
and in thy righteousness shall they be
exalted.

THE name of God is a synonym for His being and perfections : hence we are said to call upon His name, to fear His name, to love His name, to think upon His name. God has magnified His Word

above all His name. When He spake in the thunders of Sinai, this was one of His utterances, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ;' and when the great Teacher came down from heaven, He taught His disciples to pray this petition, 'Hallowed be thy name.'

In the 68th psalm David calls upon all men to praise God by 'His name Jah,' or Jehovah. This name implies self-existence, absolute, independent, underived being. The Holy Ghost uses a periphrasis to express the same thing, 'He was, and is, and is to come.' This expression is always interpreted from the Hebrew by the same word, Jehovah, which is the incommunicable name of God, and which the Jews held in such veneration that they never pronounced it. This name He peculiarly claims as His own. 'I am the Lord (*i.e.* Jehovah) that is *my* name.' And again, 'That man may know that thou whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.' Still, when God reveals Himself by this glorious and incomprehensible name, it is encouraging that He should add, 'This is my name for ever, throughout all generations.' If He had said He would be the guide and friend of His people, it would have been much ; if their father, still more ; but when He says that He will be their God, it means more than can be expressed or imagined. It means, at least, that He will pardon their sins, hear their prayers,

sanctify their minds, protect their interests, and guarantee their salvation. St. Paul has an expression which casts great light upon this point ; he says that 'God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.' In a word He has entered into a covenant with them, and has pledged His very being and perfections that He will bless and save them. 'This (He says) is my memorial throughout all generations.'

But we have not yet done with the name of God. We have repeated authority from the Old Testament writers for saying that in many instances where the name of God is used, it may mean God the Son, as well as God the Father : as in Prov. xxx. 4, 'What is His name, or what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell ?' Christ applies to Himself that incommunicable name when speaking to the Jews, 'Before Abraham was, I AM ;' *i.e.* the same underived Being ; the self-existent, eternal God. Before His birth the angel said to Mary, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus (the Divine Saviour) for he shall save his people from their sins.' He came 'to make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness :' hence 'This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.' How precious is this name ! It is above every name. 'His name is like ointment poured forth.' Ointment when contained in a box emits no odour ; but when the box is broken, the

whole house is filled with the fragrance. So with the name of Jesus : when it sounds in the ears of unawakened men it produces little more sensation than that of some great man who has figured upon the earth, and whose name is written upon the page of history ; but when it sounds in the ear of a real Christian, his whole soul is charmed with its sweetness.

We are to rejoice in the name of the Lord ; not only to trust and confide in His name, but to do so in such a way as to produce a joyful state of mind. ‘In his name shall they rejoice all the day.’ ‘Finally, my brethren,’ says St. Paul, as though it were the last thing he would say, ‘rejoice in the Lord.’ In the same epistle he reiterates this command, ‘Rejoice in the Lord alway.’ And what he preached to others, he practised himself. When he was in prison suffering and wounded, and his feet made fast in the stocks, he made his dungeon resound at midnight with songs of praise to God. The persecuted Christians largely showed this rejoicing spirit ; ‘they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.’ ‘They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a more enduring substance.’ The real people of God in every age have exhibited this same spirit ; and ought they not to rejoice, even in tribulation ? What should damp the joy of a

Christian? He has God for his Father, Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Spirit for his Teacher, the Bible for his rule, saints for his companions, angels for his ministers, and heaven for his home. What, then, should prevent a Christian from rejoicing on all occasions, and under all circumstances? This is not only his duty, but his privilege. ‘Unto you it is given, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.’ ‘If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.’ It is Christ Himself who says, ‘Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.’

Lastly, Christians are to ‘rejoice all the day.’ Man’s life is often in Scripture reckoned by days. ‘The *days* of our life are threescore years and ten.’ ‘The *days* of the years of my pilgrimage,’ said Jacob. Each day brings its own trials, its own dangers, its own necessities, its own temptations; and there must be a daily feeding upon Christ, if we would daily rejoice in Him. The food we ate yesterday is not the food of to-day; and so the grace given yesterday is not the grace for to-day. We need a daily supply of spiritual strength for our souls, as we do food for our bodies, therefore the prayer, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ applies to both. And we may depend upon it, God will give strength for the day. If we are called to suffer, He will give us suffering grace; if we are called to die, He will give us dying grace. He will give us grace when it is

needed ; why should He give it before ? Have we not found it so in our past experience ? The trials we most feared have come upon us, and yet we have been sustained ; we have been a wonder to ourselves. And while we pass the days of our sojourning here in His fear, we shall see enough of God's goodness to cause us to 'rejoice evermore.'

'And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.' This may be what David says of Christ, or what God says to His Son. There is a righteousness spoken of which God has provided for His people : 'I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.' And again, 'Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.' Again, 'My righteousness is near ; my salvation is gone forth.' Such are some of the expressions which are scattered up and down the Old Testament ; and in the New they are still more frequent : 'For herein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith ;' 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested ;' 'For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness ;' 'Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law ; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' This naturally suggests the inquiry—What do we receive by justification ? The word is clearly forensic, and is so used both in the Old and New Testaments. It signifies, to *declare* righteous, not to *make* right-

eous. Moses says the judges are to justify the righteous, and to condemn the wicked. Now this decision did not make the righteous righteous, or the wicked wicked, but judicially declared them to be such. Solomon says that those who condemn the righteous, and those who justify the wicked, are both an abomination to the Lord: now this wrong judgment does not affect their respective characters; they are inherently and substantially the same; it only changes their condition in the eye of the Law. The prophet Isaiah and St. Paul both use the word in this sense; nor is there a single instance in the whole of Scripture where it is used in any other. The 11th article of our Church, 'Of the justification of man,' declares, 'We are *accounted* righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' This is the imputed righteousness of Christ, or justification, and is totally different and distinct from the righteousness of believers, which is called sanctification, and which is the work of the Holy Spirit. The former is instantaneous and complete; the latter is simultaneous with the former, but gradual in development. This distinction is important, and should be borne in mind, otherwise those will often be sad whom God has never made sad. The most sincere Christians feel that they are not absolutely righteous. They feel the stirrings of sin within them; they feel that they

fall short both of their own sense of duty, and the standard of the Law. How sad it is to meet with those who inquire, 'What amount of duty must I perform to be fully justified? What penances must I endure? What pilgrimages must I make? What masses must I procure? And often after all these have been done, the victims of this system have gone out of this world in a state of indescribable gloom. The word justification means more than pardon. It means the very opposite. If you say that a man is pardoned, it means that he has been found guilty, but has experienced the clemency of his sovereign: his life is spared, but this gives him no claim to preferment, no right to attend his prince's person. Now Christ has done much more than procure our pardon: He has secured our justification. He has not only rescued us from hell, but raised us to heaven; not only saved us from death, but given us a title to eternal life. What Christ did, as well as what He suffered, was for sinners. His active, as well as His passive obedience was for sinners. He not only endured the penalty of the Law by His death, but fulfilled its requirements by His life. In a word, He was 'made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

VERSE 17.

For thou art the glory of their strength : and
in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

GOD is not only the strength of His people, but the glory of that strength. If they are strong, they are 'strong in the Lord,' 'strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.' They have no strength in themselves at the beginning of their spiritual life, nor at any subsequent period of it. They cannot lay up a stock of grace, or form a treasure in themselves upon which they can draw, in an emergency. It is with our spiritual experience as with the manna in the wilderness ; the people had to gather it every day, and if they gathered more than enough for the day's consumption, it was of no avail. We often want to have strength in advance, but God never gives more than enough for present need. We must fetch our daily supply of grace from Christ ; we even live a life out of ourselves ; 'I live,' says the apostle, 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' We live *in* as well as *to* and *for* Christ. As the branches depend upon the root, and not the root upon the branches ; as the stream depends upon the fountain, and not the fountain upon the stream,—so Christ's people draw all their sustenance from Him.

When a Christian is led to feel that he has no inherent strength to fight the battles of life, and to look incessantly to Christ for succour and grace to perform any duty, to resist any temptation, or to bear any trial, he then understands and realises in his own experience the truth of the apostle's words, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' At the same time we must not overlook the fact that when a man is, in the language of Scripture, 'born from above,' or 'of the Spirit,' there is not only an influence exerted, but a principle implanted, a living, abiding, operative principle. This is said to be a seed which remaineth in him, an incorruptible seed, living and abiding for ever. It is called a new heart, a new creation of the inner man ; it is fundamentally opposed to the old man, and never ceases to be so ; the old man is always the old man, and is never changed or improved. It is a great mistake to imagine that the old man is made a new creature by the operation of the Holy Spirit : the flesh and the Spirit, the old man and the new, can never amalgamate, nor live in amity ; they can never assimilate, but must be eternally irreconcilable, and will unceasingly resist each other until one of them is conquered. The new man must, however, be victorious ; the old man, like the house of Saul, growing weaker and weaker. If, therefore, the Christian keep his body in subjection, it is because the new man grows

stronger ; and this is what we mean by growth in grace. It is the growth of a child into a man, and thus it comes to pass that 'the elder shall serve the younger.' At the same time the new man can be ministered to, and the old mortified ; for as pure air, wholesome food, and suitable exercise, are all necessary to brace and invigorate the body, so it is with the soul : it, too, must live upon the manna of God's word, avoid the infected air of the world, and practise the constant exercise of prayer ; and as the old man is strengthened by indulgence, so on the other hand the new man is strengthened by self-denial and watchfulness. We must stir up ourselves to lay hold of the promise, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.'

'And in thy favour shall our horn be exalted.' For favour we may read face, because our state of mind towards each other is exhibited in the face. We look where we love, and avert the face where we disapprove ; love expands the face in a smile, and anger clouds it with a frown. Jacob, when he was met by his brother Esau with unexpected kindness, said, 'I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. And of David it is said concerning his son Absalom (after he had slain his brother Ammon) that he would not see him, though he was partially reconciled to him ; 'The king said, Let

him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face ; so Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.' This language is of frequent occurrence throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms. In the daily services of the Church we pray, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and shew us the light of his countenance ;' or, as the Bible version expresses it, 'cause his face to shine upon us.' Also in that ancient form of benediction with which the high priest was instructed to bless the assembled Israelites, the same expressions occur, 'The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.' The great privilege of God's people is said to be this, 'They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance ;' and this is what every believer desires above all things.

My readers, let us ask ourselves, Has God begun a good work in our hearts ? Do we hate what we once loved, and love what we once hated ? Are old things passed away and all things become new ? If this be so, we may be sure that God's Spirit has been at work in our hearts, and will dwell in us as the Comforter. This is what our Saviour promised, and what is described as the privilege of every child of God. 'God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' 'The Spirit itself beareth witness

with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.' Well may the Christian rejoice in such free, unmerited favour as this ! A favour that exalts the vile, needy, outcast sinner to sit among princes ! 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !' This is something to be known and realised. At the same time, where this blessing of assurance is enjoyed, it does not exempt its possessors from the occasional hidings of God's countenance, for the most eminent saints have been exercised in this way. David complains, 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord ? For ever ? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me ?' And Job exclaims, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find him !' 'Behold, I go forward, but he is not there ; and backward, but I cannot perceive him : on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him ; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.' But with Job the Christian can say also, 'He knoweth the way that I take ; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

VERSE 18.

For the Lord is our defence ; and the Holy
One of Israel is our King.

WHAT God said to Abraham, He says in effect to all His spiritual children, ‘I am thy shield.’ Now the excellency of a shield consisted (1) in being moveable ; wherever the point of danger or assault might be, the shield could be interposed. (2) In the largeness and breadth of it ; it could hide and cover the bearer from all darts that were flung at him. (3) In being impenetrable : stones and darts cast upon it would recoil upon him who threw them. Some ancient shields, besides their ornamental bosses, had one large boss in the middle, with a sharp spike in it, to pierce and wound the adversary. That the Lord is a shield to His people is stated three times over in Psalm cxv. : ‘O Israel, trust in the Lord : he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord : He is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord : he is their help and their shield.’ Now, to some persons this might appear to be mere tautology and vain repetition ; but it is the reverse of this. God is the same in all ages, and they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Their ‘defence is of God ;

yea, their defence is God, He is interposed between them and all harm. 'I am thy shield ;' a shield too solid for any weapon to penetrate, too broad to leave any valued or endeared interest uncovered. He is the 'strong tower,' into which the righteous flee, and are safe; the 'castle' in which they take refuge in the day of trouble ; the 'fortress' where they are secure from all evil. All nature is taxed to afford figures and illustrations of the invincible defence and security of God's people. When David remembers who is the defence of His people, he inquires in a tone of triumph, 'Who is God, save the Lord ? or who is a rock, save our God ?' And when he realises in his own personal experience that God is his defence, he bids defiance to all his foes : 'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.'

'The Holy One of Israel is our King.' More than twenty times in one single book does God declare Himself to be the Holy One of Israel. With God holiness is His very essence : could He cease to be holy, He would cease to be God. The angels who rebelled lost their holiness ; but though they became devils, they did not cease to be angels. It was the glory of Adam that he was made in the image of God ; heavenly truth shone in his understanding, and holiness was enthroned in his heart ; but when he transgressed,

though he lost his holiness, he did not cease to be a man.

Now, holiness with man is a superadded quality, an infusion, but with God it is His essence, and it is the purpose of God in the economy of grace to restore in man the lost image of his Creator, and to make him partaker of His holiness. He says, ‘Be ye holy, for I am holy ;’ and just as far as we are aspiring and labouring after holiness, so far have we been brought under the influence of true and genuine piety. He who is ‘the Holy One’ is ‘our King.’ He is not only the King of all the earth, but He is pre-eminently and emphatically ‘the King of saints ;’ and as they are like Him, they love Him, they delight in His laws and rejoice in His statutes ; they acknowledge all the blessings of this life as coming immediately from His hands, and they especially rejoice in their relationship to Him. They feel constrained to yield Him the warmest affections of their hearts, the loudest praises of their tongues, and the undivided service of their lives.

VERSE 19.

Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one,
and saidst, I have laid help upon one that
is mighty ; I have exalted one chosen out
of the people.

HITHERTO David has spoken of God, what He is in Himself, and what He is to His people, but now he represents God as speaking to another Divine Person in visions. This he often does in the Psalms, as in the 2nd, where God says of Christ, ‘Thou art my Son ;’ ‘Ask of Me ;’ in the 45th Psalm, ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre ;’ and in the 110th, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord ;’ so in the verse before us, God addresses some one as His Holy One. We gather from Scripture that this is God the Son. When David says in the 16th Psalm, ‘I have set the Lord always before me,’ he speaks of Christ, as St. Peter showed on the day of Pentecost. See Acts, ii. 25, &c. But irrespectively of St. Peter’s application of this passage to Jesus, it must refer to Him in the very nature of things ; for all the children of men are by nature corrupt and filthy. ‘Who (asks Job) can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one :’ therefore there is none holy but the

Lord. Jesus, indeed, was a partaker of flesh and blood, yet without sin. His body was not produced by natural generation, but by Divine operation. ‘Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.’ The stream of corruption was cut off, and therefore Jesus was immaculate and perfectly holy. When Satan came to tempt Christ, he found ‘nothing in Him,’ and all his attempts to elicit sin from His nature, were like attempts to bring fire out of ice. How Jesus could be ‘tempted like as we are,’ is not easy to explain. The Church of England, speaking of Christ’s humanity, says in her fifteenth Article, ‘Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh and in His spirit.’ And in her matchless Litany she prays, ‘By the mystery of Thy *holy* Incarnation . . . good Lord, deliver us.’ This we know for certain, that ‘He suffered being tempted,’ as is stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews: ‘He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.’ ‘He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.’ He wore our humanity, and in our nature He put away sin ‘by the sacrifice of Him-

self.' In the language of St. Paul, 'He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, . . . nailing it to his cross ; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.' (*Margin*—'in himself.') Jesus was so spiritually minded, that when the people would have made Him a king, 'He departed into a desert place ;' so bennignant, that 'He went about doing good ;' so ardent in His duty that to minister to one sinful daughter of Adam was more to Him than His necessary food. He was so humble, that He washed His disciples' feet ; so forgiving, that He prayed for His murderers ; so meek, that 'when He was reviled, He reviled not again ;' so resigned to His Father's will, that, taking the cup of suffering from His hand, He said, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?' The more carefully we study the character of Jesus as delineated in the four Gospels, the more are we convinced that He is 'The Holy One of God.'

This Holy One is also the Mighty Saviour : 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' In Him there is help for all; there is no want so great that He cannot fully supply it ; there are no circumstances so desperate that He cannot afford sufficient help. 'He hath a sufficiency of care, wisdom, and faithfulness to observe the seasons

wherein succour is necessary unto us ; a sufficiency of tenderness, mercy, and compassion to excite Him thereunto ; a sufficiency of power to afford succour that shall be effectual ; a sufficiency of acceptance at the throne of grace to prevail with God for suitable supplies and succour ; in short, ' He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by 'him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

' I have exalted one chosen out of the people.' This is a precious assurance for the people of God. Jesus is not a being far off ; not a stranger to their feelings and experiences, but one of themselves, and therefore able to feel with them and for them. He is said to be 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' The miseries, calamities, and sufferings to which human nature is subject, are not to Him a mere matter of hearsay and indifference ; He has an experimental knowledge of them all. On earth He was tempted like as we are ; He endured every variety of want, and pain, and sorrow ; and now in heaven He exercises a tender compassion towards His suffering servants here below. He is interested in them, for they are His own, bought with His own precious blood ; He is concerned for them as one closely related to them, for He is truly a brother born for adversity ; nay, more, He is one with them, for His words to Saul the persecutor were not, 'Why persecutest

thou my people?' but 'Why persecutest thou me?'

This sympathy of Christ with and towards His suffering people is an extensive sympathy—it reaches to all their infirmities; a proportionable sympathy—answerable to every occasion; a perpetual sympathy—as long as He continues High Priest and we remain subject to infirmities, so long will He be touched with the feeling of them.

VERSE 20.

I have found David my servant; with my
holy oil have I anointed him.

IT was the custom in ancient times, whenever a person was appointed to the office of either prophet, priest, or king, to anoint him with oil. This was the case with Aaron as priest, with Elisha as prophet, with David as king. In process of time, therefore, the person came to be called 'the Lord's anointed.' Afterwards this name came to be applied to the promised Saviour: Messiah in Hebrew, and Christ in Greek, mean Anointed. In the 2nd Psalm Jesus is called by this name, 'against the Lord, and against his anointed.' Jesus was anointed to His threefold

office, not with oil, but with the Holy Ghost. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.' 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.' It is evident that the verse before us cannot apply to David only; it finds its complete fulfilment in Him of whom David was a type. In Ezekiel, xxxiv., where God compares the Jewish nation to a flock, He says, 'I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David.' The 37th chapter tells us that Israel and Judah 'shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.' They are to be one nation under one king. David my servant shall be king over them, 'and they all shall have one shepherd.' They are to be restored to their own land,—a literal country, a literal restoration, a literal king; and yet David had been dead four hundred and fifty years. Jesus now reigns in the hearts of His people, but He is not yet supreme over all the earth, as He will be when the promise made to His virgin mother shall be fulfilled, 'The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.'

VERSES 21-24.

With whom my hand shall be established : mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him ; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him : and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

IN these verses we have a group of promises made by Jehovah to His Holy One ; promises of strength, deliverance, and victory. They are addressed to the Son in His human nature, for only as man could He need them. As God He upholds all things by the word of His power ; as man He needed to be Himself upheld by the arm of the Father. In the 49th of Isaiah we find Christ complaining of the unbelief of Israel in a tone of human despondency, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain ;' but He immediately adds, 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.' And the Father replies, 'In an acceptable time, have I

heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee ; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.' The human soul of Christ needed this encouragement. He felt the pressure of despondency without the sin of doubt ; He tasted the bitterness of failure, without giving way to hopelessness ; He pursued His work relying on the promises of God, and upheld by His right hand. All the forces of the enemy were brought to bear upon the great Captain of our salvation ; all the cunning of 'the Son of wickedness' was employed against Him : could He be conquered there remained no other deliverer for a lost world. Through pride and lust of power Satan fell from heaven ; hence it must have been incomprehensible to him that the Son of God should voluntarily lay aside His glory, and humble Himself to take the very nature of those He came to save. Utter darkness cannot comprehend perfect light ; a nature utterly evil cannot believe in perfect purity : therefore, the devil, having triumphed over the first Adam, hoped by uniting force with fraud to gain a similar victory over the second Adam. But here he found One who could not be tempted with evil ; his efforts were unavailing, his temptations fell powerless. Even when he had done his utmost, when the lifeless body of Jesus was taken down from the shameful cross, and laid in the tomb by a few sorrowing, doubting disciples, the day of his

seeming triumph was the eve of his utter defeat. Through death the Saviour destroyed him that had the power of death, and the voice which broke the silence of the sepulchre was, ‘Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, for when I fall I shall arise.’ ‘O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.’ This the Father had promised, and on His faithfulness the Son relied. The tender mercy of God, which is over all His works, was engaged on behalf of the Surety, who offered Himself to redeem the world from ruin. God sent His Son to seek and save the lost, and having sent Him, His love and faithfulness were pledged to uphold and strengthen Him until the work was finished, the victory won, the head of the serpent bruised by the promised seed of the woman.

The wars of Joshua may be considered as typifying Christ’s conflict and victory. Joshua’s name signified his office of bringing in the people to the land of Canaan, which Moses, the type of the law, was unable to do. Moses did not fight himself, he only sent forth the armies of Israel against their enemies; but Joshua went forth *with* them, led them out, shared their toils, their pains, their dangers; and when at last their enemies lay prostrate before him, he called them to take their share of the triumph, ‘Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings.’ These battles do not represent so much slaughter, but are typical of

what our spiritual Joshua does ; hence the tried and tempted Christian may gather sweet encouragement in all his conflicts, for the end is certain, the promise is, ‘God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ Here we have the great difference between the Law and the Gospel ; the Law can only command, ‘Go and do ;’ it can offer no encouragement, it can give no help ; but Jesus says, ‘I have finished the work, come and rest.’

We must not fail to notice how Christ’s victory was won : ‘In my name shall his horn be exalted.’ Our Lord continually called attention to the fact that all His mighty works were done in the name, and by the power of the Father, ‘I, by the finger of God, cast out devils,’ He said to the unbelieving Jews. And on another occasion, ‘The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do.’ ‘I am come in my Father’s name.’ It was the same with regard to His preaching, ‘My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me.’ ‘I speak that which I have seen with my Father.’ ‘Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.’ But this was not all. The final triumph of Jesus was by the power of Jehovah. ‘Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.’ ‘God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name.’ ‘The God of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus.’ This language proves beyond a doubt that Jesus, though

'perfect God,' was also 'perfect Man ; of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting.' As man He was dependent upon the power of the Father ; as man He sought His help 'with strong crying and tears ;' as man He looked in faith to Him who was able to save, and as man He was delivered. Hence we have a double assurance that He is one with His people, not in nature only, but in the fullest sympathy ; one with them in trial, in suffering, in hope, in experience : 'Wherefore He is not ashamed to call them brethren.' O my readers, let us never doubt the sympathy of Christ, or fail to realise the comfort that it gives.

VERSE 25.

I will set his hand also in the sea, and his
right hand in the rivers.

THIS indisputably refers to the peaceful and prosperous reign of Solomon ; but in order to enter into the spirit of this passage, it is necessary to examine the original grant of the Land of Promise to Abraham and his seed. The popular view is that this includes only the three well-known divisions of Palestine—Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee. But the promise made to Abraham shows, on the very face of it, that this view is most erroneous.

On the same day in which ‘Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness,’ the Lord made a covenant with him and said, ‘Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.’ This river of Egypt is not the Nile, (as some people imagine, and as Matthew Henry also asserts, when expounding a passage in the 72nd Psalm parallel to the one now under consideration), but it is the river Gilion, which rises in the north-west part of Sinai, and fifty miles northward flows into the Mediterranean: it divides Egypt from Moab and Edom, and forms the boundary of the first-named country, and is therefore called the river of Egypt. It is expressly stated by God, in words which admit of no controversy, that He would give to the seed of the patriarch the country lying between this river and the Euphrates, but only, however, for a short time. That Israel possessed what is understood by this passage is quite clear, for it is undeniable that Solomon reigned over the tract of country which is here referred to. The other river alluded to in this 25th verse, and also in the 8th verse of Psalm 72nd, must be the Euphrates, as will be clearly seen by reference to the 1 Kings, iv. 24, where we are told that Solomon had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphsah to Azzah. Now Tiphsah was a city on the banks of the Euphrates; so

that it is quite evident (from this 4th of 1 Kings) that Solomon reigned over all the countries extending from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and from the Mediterranean to the river of Egypt, and from Ezion-Geber to the head of the Persian gulf ; and the kings of these countries, we are told, brought him presents, and served him all the days of his life. The prosperous reign of Solomon, amid the gloom of the other reigns of Israel and Judah, was only like a transient gleam of sunshine on a dark and cloudy day. We feel, too, that Solomon's reign, glorious as it was, does not fulfil the language of this verse, and that of Psalm lxxii. 8; 'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea ; and from the river to the ends of the earth.' It will be observed that neither rivers nor seas are mentioned in these verses, in order, probably, that they may give a more graphic and exact representation of the universal monarchy of Christ. 'I will set His hand (which is a symbol of power) in the sea,' but no sea is named ; 'and His right hand (which is a symbol of absolute authority) in the rivers,' but no rivers are specially mentioned. This ambiguous expression allows our minds to wander freely through the world in search of the places referred to ; but each sea or river is equally suited to meet the reference ; from which we can come to no other conclusion than that universal authority is here implied.

VERSE 26.

He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father,
my God, and the rock of my salvation.

AFTER making the foregoing promises, God here makes a declaration, which is as true of the Lord Jesus as of David. As Messiah, He is inferior to the Father; He is His servant, and therefore often prays to Him in this character:—‘Father, save me from this hour,’ ‘Father, glorify thy name,’ ‘Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.’ He prays to Him as God: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ He looks to Him also as the rock of His salvation: in the 40th Psalm the Saviour says, ‘I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet on a rock and established my goings.’ That it is Christ who here speaks, St. Paul shows in the 10th Hebrews, when he applies the language of this Psalm to Him. But here, when the Father says that the Son should cry unto Him, it is in more special reference to the dominion promised in the preceding verses. It is in reference to this that the Father says to the Son, ‘Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen

for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' And again in Isaiah, xlix. 6, 'It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.'

We naturally inquire, has not Jesus asked the Father for His purchased possession ? Did He not lay down His life for the world 1800 years ago ?

One of the most mysterious subjects we can contemplate is the state of the heathen world : we should never speak of it, but we should feel as when God said to Moses, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' The will of God respecting the heathen is most clearly revealed. The Saviour not only bids His followers to teach *nations*, but to preach the Gospel to *every creature* : this is the charge He laid upon them, and if it has not been done they have most certainly neglected the command of their Master. We know that God can convert millions of the heathen in a moment, but this is not the order of His proceeding. As He has ordained that we should be warmed by the sun, and sustained by the food which He provides, so He puts honour upon men in employing them to preach the Gospel to sinners. And it seems to be one of the mysterious features of His moral

government of the world that He makes the salvation of some to depend upon the exertions of others. Yet we know that God can never be disappointed ; His designs can never be defeated or His plans thwarted. It is ours to obey, not to question ; to work, not to pry into hidden results. It is ours to hold forth the word of life as a lamp in the dark places of the earth ; it is God's to open the blind eyes that they may see it. His promise cannot fail, and in His time 'the earth *shall* be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

VERSE 27.

Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

THIS passage is obviously inapplicable to the king of Israel : in no respect can it be said that David was God's firstborn, either naturally or spiritually ; and in a very inferior sense, if at all, can we apply to him the latter clause, 'higher than the kings of the earth.'

It evidently refers to Him of whom David was a representative, and of whom St. Paul says, 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature,' and whom St. John calls 'the

beginning of the creation of God.' The Sonship of Christ is brought before us in the expression, 'firstborn.' Those who are sound in their views with respect to Christ's Sonship, and who worship the Son as co-eternal with the Father, have in this expression an argument that that Sonship is not progressive with nature, inasmuch as the conception of Christ was long after the time of Adam, who is also called the son of God ; but as Christ is the Firstborn, He must of necessity be anterior to Adam.

Again, Christ is called the Son of God from His resurrection, and from His exaltation to the right hand of God : but these events, like His miraculous conception, do not make Him the Son of God ; but simply declare Him to be so. He was called the Son of God before He became incarnate : 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry ;' 'Did we not,' says Nebuchadnezzar, 'cast three men bound into the fire ? Lo, I see four men loose, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' His eyes were supernaturally opened to see them in the furnace, and his mind inspired to call the fourth the Son of God. The eternal Sonship of Christ is clearly brought out in that sublime description which is given of wisdom in Proverbs, viii. 22, &c., where it is almost universally admitted that Christ is personified. True, 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made

under the law ;' but Christ no more became His Son because He was made of a woman than because He was made under the law : He was His Son when He was sent forth, as St. John repeatedly asserts in His first epistle. .God 'sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Now as Christ was God before He was 'manifest in the flesh' (according to St. Paul), so was He the Son of God before He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Our Saviour's own language in the 5th of John entirely agrees with this. Again, in the 6th of John, Peter says, 'Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,' and the same Evangelist tells us that he wrote the particulars of our Saviour's history that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Hence the universal Church has expressed its belief in this view in the words of the ancient creed, 'Begotten, not made, being of one Substance with the Father ;' and celebrates in its sublimest hymn the praise of Christ as 'the everlasting Son of the Father.'

We have the objection that if Christ be the Son, He must be posterior to the Father, and have had a beginning. This objection is grounded on the fallacy that Father and Son have the same meaning as when applied to men. In the case of

man there must have been a period in the life of the father when the son did not exist; but it is not so when applied to the Divine Persons. We must learn to discriminate between the order of *nature* and the order of *time*. In the order of nature God must have existed before He could purpose; but in the order of time, or duration, He never existed without His purpose, for ‘a God without thought or purpose were no God.’* And thus in the order of nature the Father must have existed before the Son, but in that of duration He never existed without the Son. The Father and the Son therefore are co-eternal; hence the Church ascribes ‘Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.’

We must also notice that in many cases where Christ is called the ‘firstborn’ it is with reference to others; ‘the firstborn from the dead,’ ‘the firstborn among many brethren.’ ‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;’ the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, and those who have it are His brethren. They shall share His glory and reign with Him; but to the Firstborn will the kingdom be given, as in Daniel, vii. 14, ‘There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;’ and in Revelation, xi. 15, ‘The kingdoms

* Andrew Fuller on the *Eternal Sonship*.

of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.' He is 'higher than the kings of the earth' in the *duration* of His kingdom. The mightiest empires of the world have passed away, their cities are buried, their palaces have crumbled into dust, the very names of their kings have been forgotten ; but of Christ's kingdom there shall be no end, and His Name, which is above every name, shall be magnified in the everlasting songs of heaven. Again, He is 'higher than the kings of the earth' in the *influence* of His rule. Conquerors have overrun vast regions, and secured the outward homage of the inhabitants ; but have not been able to subdue the wills of the people, or to gain their hearts. Kings have exercised absolute control over the lives and fortunes, the actions, and even the words, of their subjects ; but their thoughts and affections have remained free as ever. Very different is the rule of Christ, which *begins* with the heart, 'for the kingdom of God is within you.' Every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and the unruly will submit to His easy yoke. The rich count all things but lost that they may win Christ ; the mighty lay down their honours at His feet ; the wise cease to glory in their wisdom, and enter the kingdom of God as little children. And further, He is 'higher than the kings of the earth' in the *extent* and

majesty of His dominion. ‘*All* kings shall fall down before him; *all* nations shall serve him.’ But this earth is only a very small part of His kingdom. He upholds all things by the word of His power, and sits at God’s right hand. ‘Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.’ St. John tells us how the glorified saints and the unfallen angels sing the praise of the Lamb that was slain, and then adds, ‘And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’

VERSE 28.

My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

GOD makes no distinction between His mercy and His covenant; He considers them synonymous. It is a condition of the covenant that mercy shall be exercised towards those who are interested in it. When God says by Isaiah, ‘I will make an

everlasting covenant with you,' He adds, 'Even the sure mercies of David.'

It is clear that the parties to this covenant are the Father and the Son, and this is the point which we will here dwell upon. This is no mere speculative point on which to exercise our intellect, but a doctrine of untold importance : it is the foundation upon which our salvation is built, and the fountain from which all our comfort must flow. If the covenant were made between God and man, what a dark prospect would lie before us ! God did once make a covenant with man—the first covenant with Adam, 'Do, and live ; transgress, and die.' These terms were awful, even for an un-fallen creature ; and the result was awful, for man broke this covenant, and thus became the slave of sin, subject to death and in danger of eternal misery, had not infinite love and mercy found a ransom. God established a second covenant, not this time with man, but with His own Son, an everlasting covenant which cannot be broken. In Isaiah, xlii. God says, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth,' using language which can only refer to Christ, and He adds, 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.' The prophet Zechariah, also, makes a most interesting reference to this covenant. After speaking of Christ as the King, 'just, and having salvation ; lowly and

riding upon an ass,' he continues, 'He shall speak peace unto the heathen ; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners.' And by the prophet Malachi Christ is called 'the messenger of the covenant.' In Hebrews, viii. 6, 7, He is said to be 'the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been found for the second.' In the 10th chapter Christ is represented as saying, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God ;' that is, to keep the covenant ; and it is in reference to this that He declares, 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing.' It is said of a great warrior, who a few years since passed from among us, that 'he never lost a battle ;' but of the great Captain of our salvation it may be said, not only that He never lost a battle, but that He never lost a man. After the last campaign shall be over between Him and 'the prince of this world,' not one shall be missing that ever belonged to Christ.

If, then, Christ contracts for His people in the covenant of grace, it may be asked, 'What have they to do ?' To receive salvation as a free gift,

as the purchase of His life and death, and to show their gratitude for it by walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

VERSE 29.

His seed also will I make to endure for ever,
and his throne as the days of heaven.

WE shall consider this passage first of our Lord personally, and then of His people. Doubtless David had in his mind his own immediate successor when this promise was made to him, but the ultimate fulfilment was when He came, who was of the house and lineage of David. When the word *seed* is thus used, it always refers to Christ, as when God said to Abraham, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' St. Paul's exposition of this text is, 'He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.' It is, therefore, of Him God speaks, indicating the eternal existence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Job's consolation under his awful sufferings was, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' In the epistle to the Hebrews we find a continual reference to

Christ as our ever-living Intercessor and Priest : ‘Thou art a Priest for ever ;’ ‘He abideth a Priest continually ;’ ‘This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.’ And further, the prophet Zechariah says of Him, ‘He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne ; and he shall be a priest upon his throne.’ He is not only a Priest to atone, but a King to rule ; He orders all things, all circumstances, all events, and makes them work together for good to His people. And ‘of His kingdom (as of His priesthood) there shall be no end ;’ His throne shall endure, not for the centuries of earthly reckoning, but ‘as the days of heaven,’ which have no number and no night. ‘A glorious high throne is the place of our sanctuary.’ Here is our refuge, and our place of rest. All that Jesus is, He is for us. He is ever pleading our cause, ever ready to send supplies of grace, to sustain us in temptation and to strengthen us in weakness. ‘If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.’ If He saved us while we were enemies, He will not cast us off now that we are sons ; if He was gracious to us when we were alienated from Him, He will not be unmindful of us now that we are reconciled.

We must now consider this verse in its second aspect, viz., as having reference to God’s people.

In Ps. xxii., which obviously refers to Christ, it is said, 'A seed shall serve him.' Indeed, in the first promise given of a Saviour, God says to the serpent, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' Now as all unconverted people are the seed of the serpent, so we may infer that the seed of the woman includes Christ and all who belong to Him. There would be no enmity in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ towards the ungodly, for He died to save sinners; but when a man is born again, he is translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son; he is enrolled in a different army under a different Captain, and is pledged to fight under His banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil; consequently he becomes an object of hatred to those whose ranks he has left. But while he is thus called to suffer reproach for Christ's sake, he is also admitted to high privileges. All the terms applied to the Israelites as a nation of priests, as a peculiar treasure, are transferred to the spiritual Israel. In 1 Pet. ii. 9, they are said to be 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people'; and in Rev. i. 6, they are spoken of as 'kings and priests unto God.' Surely the Christian with God for his Father, and Jesus Christ for his Saviour, is raised to higher dignity than all this world can bestow. However lowly the condition of God's people, however

straitened their worldly circumstances, they are 'heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.' This is the sure promise made to them—that if they suffer, they shall also reign with their Lord. 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.' 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.'

VERSES 30-32.

If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments ; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

GOD's people, in every period of time and in every country in the world, are designated Christ's children. It is in reference to this that He is called 'The Everlasting Father,' and also says of Himself and His people, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.' They are said to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of in-

corruptible,'—‘born of the Spirit.’ As children they grow ; as children they are effectually guarded and abundantly supplied ; they are not only brought to heaven, but provided with everything necessary on their way thither.

In earthly families the children are born at different times and in different places, and in after-life are often widely scattered : they have different occupations, various talents and gifts; they differ in stature, in feature, in complexion, in manner,—yet amidst all there is a resemblance, a family likeness. So among Christ’s children. They live in different ages, inhabit different climates, occupy different stations, are endowed with different talents ; still they show their common relationship, they bear Christ’s image and exhibit His spirit ; so that wherever they are, and however engaged, men ‘take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.’

Again, the members of a family are identified in feeling and desire ; they seek each other’s welfare, they depend upon the same paternal care, the interest of one is the interest of all. So with the family of Christ ; they are essentially one,—‘If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.’ It is a wonderful subject, this oneness of Christ with His people; and their oneness in Him with God and with each other. It

was for this the loving Saviour prayed when He was about to finish His work of redemption by laying down His life for them. ‘That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.’ We cannot fathom the depth, nor scale the height, of such words as these ; but this much we can learn from them—that as Christ is one with the Father, so we are one with Christ ; we are the Father’s gift, the Son’s purchase, the Spirit’s workmanship, and the honour and perfections of the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, are engaged for our salvation and security. ‘My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.’

Such is the happiness and safety of the children of Christ. Can they ever cease to be sensible of their privileges ? Can they ever neglect or undervalue them ? Our own consciences give a melancholy answer, and in the passage before us such a possibility is contemplated, and the consequences stated ; ‘If his children forsake my law ; I will visit their transgression with the rod.’ This language assumes that God’s children *may* forsake His statutes and break His commandments, but surely it is to be understood with some limits and modifications. If a child were systematically and habitually to oppose his father’s commands, we should rightly conclude that he was undutiful,

disobedient, and essentially depraved : so every one who carelessly and habitually breaks the commandments of our heavenly Father cannot be called a child of God at all. God has taken security that His people cannot wilfully forsake His laws : ‘ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.’ Everything acts according to its nature ; and where the new nature is engrafted there will be holy affections, instincts, and principles, and all these are outraged by the approach of sin. God’s promise is, ‘ I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.’ The great end He has in view in this new creation, is to form a people for Himself who shall show forth His praise, and learn that happiness is only to be found in the way of holiness. If, therefore, there be good seed in the heart, there will be holy fruits in the life : ‘ The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.’ When, therefore, Christ’s children are said to forsake God’s law, it must refer to *acts* of sin, not to *habits*,—to *occasional infirmities*, not to *deliberate transgressions*. The man may be taken in a fault who is not habitually faulty, or seduced into an act of sin without indulging sinful habits. Though

sin does not reign in God's people, it exists ; though it is wounded, it is not dead. It possesses great vitality, and if it be not constantly watched and repressed, it will rush from its lurking-place and commit great damage. Still, as a man who falls into the mire will not wallow in it, so a child of God who falls into sin will not continue therein. The fountain polluted will work itself clear, the needle disturbed will rectify itself ; and grace in the heart will wrestle with constitutional tendencies, and resist natural besetments until it bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Grace in the heart will find utterance in such language as this : ' Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe ; ' ' Order my steps in thy word.' For the honour of their Master, as well as for their own peace, Christians must watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. What discredit have the sins of good men brought upon the cause of Christ ! How often do worldly men refer to the occasional sins of patriarchs and prophets to justify their own evil habits ! But this is to convert medicine into poison, and make that which was intended as a caution, an excuse for guilt ; this is a snare by means of which the enemy entraps and destroys the souls of the ungodly.

But the text further declares that the transgression of God's children shall not go unpunished ; their deviations from the path of duty will not be

regarded as venial sins, or passed over because they are beloved of God. On the contrary, as a sin in a child carefully and christianly brought up is, so to speak, more sinful than in one who has never had such advantages,—so sin in God's people who have been taught of Him is more hateful than in those who have never known Him. God's word is full of instances of saints punished severely for their sins. Jacob, who by falsehood deceived his father, was, in his old age, bitterly deceived by his own children. Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips, and was excluded from the earthly Canaan. Eli suffered his children to become vile and restrained them not, therefore they became his reproach and sorrow, and God declared that the iniquities of his house should never be purged. 'Be sure your sin will find you out,' is God's own word, and is most assuredly true. God hates sin anywhere, but it is especially hateful when committed by those in whose hearts He has put His Holy Spirit, and whom He has chosen to be His witnesses before a careless and godless world. Rather let us cultivate tenderness of conscience, and be tremblingly alive to every approach of sin, scrupulously careful lest we should neglect any duty. Let us not only abstain from evil, but avoid even the appearance of evil.

It is our happiness to be assured that when God chastens us He is dealing with us as a Father,

and not as a Judge ; not with severity, but with pity. He wounds but to heal ; He chastens but to purify ; He corrects but to cure. His chastisements are not manifestations of His wrath, but expressions of His love. He sees us half-hearted and worldly-minded ; loitering on our way to heaven, and picking up any flower that grows beside the path ; so He sends affliction after us, and says to it, ‘Go, smite that creature ; wither that gourd ; remove that idol ; embitter that cup ; go, and quicken my people’s footsteps in the way that leads to everlasting joys, and rekindle their desires after the pleasures that are at my right hand for evermore.’ And how many of God’s children will acknowledge that in the midst of their heaviest trials their hearts have been happy, because they recognised the Father’s hand in them all ! They can say, ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.’ If their circumstances have been straitened, their souls have been enlarged ; if their bodies have been imprisoned, their spirits have been emancipated ; if the sources of creature-comfort have been dried up, they have been led to seek their happiness more entirely from their Creator. In short, the rod that smote them has dropped balm to heal them, the grievous chastisement has afterwards yielded ‘the peaceable fruits of righteousness.’ We do not say that afflictions *always* lead to

these gracious results ; if they did, necessarily *all* would be sanctified by them ; but we know this is not the case. Affliction too often repels instead of attracting, and when calamities come upon the unconverted, they know not whence they are, nor the object for which they are sent, consequently they only produce murmuring and rebellion. Let us never forget that the oftener iron is melted the harder it becomes ; so trials, if not sanctified, harden the heart. There is nothing we should so much fear as being left to ourselves, lest God should say, ‘Why should ye be stricken any more ? Ye will revolt more and more.’ Better that we should lose our liberty, our property, and all that makes life sweet to us, than that God should withdraw His hand and say, ‘Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone.’ Strengthened indeed ought we to be in bearing affliction by the remembrance that the chastening rod is laid upon us to do us good. Has He not said, ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten ?’ If we were without trials, proof would be wanting that we were children of God, for ‘what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ?’ Others may escape the rod and obtain all their desires for this life, but ‘what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?’ Rather let us choose, like Moses, ‘to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of

sin for a season.' 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

VERSE 33.

Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

WE shall ascertain the literal meaning of this passage if we place beside it another, which contains the promise made to David when he had ascended the throne of Israel: 'I will set up thy seed after thee . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever; I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.' Now the sins of David and Solomon were much greater than that of Saul, yet God showed a favour to them which

He denied to the latter. But if we compare their characters we see an important difference. Saul was a natural man, David a spiritual man ; Saul had *another* heart, David a *new* one. Saul was influenced in all his actions by mere selfish, worldly considerations, whereas David's one habitual purpose was this : 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' Hence Saul was rejected ; he founded no dynasty, perpetuated no royal line, his kingly office died with himself : but David's children succeeded him on the throne and reigned, enjoying, as it seemed, the favour God had promised to them.

The history of Solomon is one of the most alarming and instructive in the whole compass of God's word. When we reflect how he who had received such signal marks of God's favour could yet fall into the snare of the devil, it undeniably proves that, but for the sustaining grace of the Holy Spirit, there is no depth of sin into which we should not fall, no enormity which we should not commit. While, however, Solomon was under a spiritual eclipse we see that God did not utterly take away his mercy from him. The book of Ecclesiastes proves this. There is undeniable internal evidence that that book was not written

before his fall ; it is equally impossible that it could have been written during his fall ; it must then have been written after his fall : after he had accomplished all his magnificent works, and drained all the sources of sensual gratification, God returned to him to awake him from his delusions : he was restored from his mental and moral madness ; and as David wrote a psalm expressive of his deep contrition, so Solomon wrote a book indicative of his true repentance.

But this text has received its complete and literal fulfilment in the history of our Saviour, who is referred to here ; for the passage has a higher application than to the posterity of David. If we compare the promise already quoted (2 Sam. vii. 12, &c.), with the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and that of Paul at Antioch, we are led to the conclusion that its ultimate application is to Him who is emphatically and pre-eminently the Son of David. There will be no controversy on this point with those who reverence the positive statements of Scripture. A peculiar turn is given to the promise. It is not, ‘my loving-kindness will I not take from *them*,’ but ‘from *him*.’ How can this apply to the eternal Son, the Son of His honour and favour, His everlasting delight ? It refers to Jesus as man’s Substitute and Surety, for in this position He stands no longer as the Father’s equal, but as the Representative of sinful

man. ‘He made him to be sin for us.’ Therefore God exacted at His hand the punishment due to sin: ‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.’ ‘He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities.’ In no other way can we account for the agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. If He died solely as a pattern of patience and martyr for truth, and not as a sacrifice for sin, then Christ was inferior to many of His own followers in fortitude and resignation. Stephen, expiring under a shower of stones, exclaimed, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God !’ Paul said, ‘Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,’ looking upon death rather as a triumph. These and many others died suffering deaths apparently with greater resignation than our Lord, but the difference between them is this,—they suffered only the martyrdom of the body, Jesus bore also the immeasurable weight of the sins of the whole world. In this way, truly, can we account for His prayer, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ We can only explain the agony of Christ upon this principle: that God had ceased to regard Him as the Son of His love, and dealt with Him as the substitute of sinful man, exacting from Him the punishment due to sin. Still, the promise of love was fulfilled in the

person of Jesus, ‘My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from Him.’ The hiding of God’s face wrung from the breaking heart of the Son that mysterious exclamation, ‘My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?’ but by-and-by the cloud rolled away, and He was able, with returning confidence, to say, ‘Into thy hands I commend my spirit.’ How indissolubly does this associate Christ with His people ! How dear to Him must those be for whom He suffered so much !

They, too, who are one with Christ have also obtained this gift ; to them also, the promise will be fulfilled. They, too, can say, ‘I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.’ ‘This God is our God, for ever and ever ; he will be our guide even unto death.’ Whatever God has promised he will perform, for ‘God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent.’ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God’s word. After the children of Israel had wandered forty years in the wilderness, Joshua was able to say to them, ‘Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spake concerning you ; all

are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.' God's spiritual Israel can say the same. He has not led them in the *direct* way, but it has been the *right* way ; not the way they *would* go, but the way they *should* go. He has not given them all they wished, but He has given everything that was good for them. He has not interposed on their behalf at the time they expected, but it has been at the best time. He has not granted all their prayers, but every denial was in mercy.

VERSE 34.

My covenant will I not break, nor alter the
thing that is gone out of my lips.

THERE is set forth the inviolability of the covenant. One party alone is mentioned, 'My covenant will I not break.' In every covenant there must of necessity be two or more contracting parties ; as in the case of Abraham and Abimelech who covenanted by the well Beersheba ; and Jacob and Laban who covenanted over a heap of stones, and called it Galeed and Mizpah. Now this passage implies that there is one with whom God has made a certain covenant which He will not break, and to whom He has spoken a certain thing which He will not alter. The psalm teaches us that this is the eternal Son.

In the 19th verse this becomes evident, ‘Thou spakest in a vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.’ We learn who is God’s Holy One when St. Peter interprets and applies the 16th psalm to Christ, ‘Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.’ Here then, we have the Father speaking of the Son. In the 40th psalm we have the Son speaking to the Father, ‘Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.’ This is the covenant to which St. Paul alludes in writing to the Galatians, and which, he says, ‘was confirmed of God in Christ,’ and which he compares with the covenant of works renewed on Mount Sinai. He says of the latter, ‘It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.’ There is none to covenant with God beside Himself: man is a sinner, and cannot aspire to do this. Where there is only one party there can be no mediator. But the meaning of the apostle seems to be—God is one in His essence, but not in His personality. In the new covenant man cannot be admitted as one of the contracting parties, since he has broken the old covenant: the covenant of grace therefore must be made with one who is incapable of breaking or disannulling it. This can only be done by making

the covenant with His Son, even with Himself. This is distinctly stated in Isa. xlii. 6, 'I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ;' and there can be no doubt as to the Person referred to, as St. Matthew tells us that this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. (Matt. xii. 17-21.) We have the same precious and positive statement in Isa. xlix. 6, 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.' And again, in the 8th verse, 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee ; and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.' Christ, therefore, acts on behalf of His people; hence He is called the second Adam. Why the second Adam ? Because Adam was a representative person ; he was the great head of his posterity ; they were in him when he fell, and therefore they must be in Christ, the second Adam, to be saved from the effects of the fall.

My readers, if you know nothing of this covenant, if you do not feel that this alone is your hope of salvation, you have never been a scholar in the school of Jesus. What can you do as a sinner? If God should soon and suddenly call you into His presence, what have you to urge in arrest of judgment? There is nothing for sinful man to do but

to flee from himself to his Surety. ‘Accepted in the Beloved’ is the only plea of the most eminent saints. As Jesus became the Substitute for sinful man, both law and justice took hold on Him, and by His perfect obedience both law and justice were satisfied. When God made His great covenant with Abram, He commanded him to take certain animals, and to divide them in the midst, saying by this symbolical act, ‘May I be as this animal, if I break my part of my engagement.’ We have an interesting allusion to this in Jer. xxxiv. 18–20. It was on this occasion that ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.’ This covenant is very fully set forth in Heb. ix., but there our translators have employed the word ‘testament,’ evidently under the impression that the apostle was referring to the making of a will. It is important to remark that they translate the same word ‘covenant’ no less than seven times in the preceding chapter, and the passages used to illustrate the argument always refer to the new covenant which was to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It is then the blood of the Mediator of the new covenant by which we are sanctified; the ‘blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins.’ ‘By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water.’ This is indeed the better covenant which was established upon

The Eighty-ninth Psalm.

better promises, and sealed with the blood of the Son of God. Well might the apostle say, 'That by God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' (Heb. vi. 18.) The terms of the old covenant were, 'Do, and live ; transgress, and die ;' the terms of the new one are, 'Look, and live ; believe, and be saved.' Repentance and faith and regeneration are not conditions of the covenant, but blessings conferred by it. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord : I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.'

VERSE 35.

have I sworn by my holiness that I will
not lie unto David.

Examine very carefully all God's transactions with David, we never, I think find that He made any to him formally. He made a promise, and put it into a solemn covenant with him. In the same way it is stated that God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I do not

find that He swore formally to the two latter, but frequently when God renews the great promise of a Saviour, which He made to Abraham by oath, He declares that He will perform the oath which He made to their forefather Abraham. It would seem that whenever God renews this promise to any of the patriarchs, He does not employ a fresh oath, but refers to the one already made, and rests upon that.

The custom of swearing on solemn and suitable occasions is very ancient. Abraham, when returning from the slaughter of the kings, took an oath that he would take nothing of the spoil. He exacted an oath from Eliezer that he would not take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the land. Jacob exacted an oath from his son Joseph that he would not bury him in Egypt, but in Canaan. Nor was this the practice of the Old Testament saints because they were in a state of ignorance. It was done in the New Testament. St. Paul writing to the Corinthians and to the Galatians appeals to God for the truth of his statements, and also declares that among men an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife, and that God conforms to this practice, for grace, consolation, and security to His people.

To swear solemnly and reverently is an act of worship, and it is enjoined upon God's people to do it as they would any other religious duty. 'Thou

shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him, and shalt swear by his name,' that is, thou shalt swear by all His attributes and perfections. God swears to David by His truth and holiness, because these attributes are more especially involved in the taking of an oath ; He swears that He will forfeit His character for truth and holiness, if He fail to do all that He has promised respecting His servant David. And just as Zacharias, when filled with the Holy Ghost, extended the blessings of the oath God sware to Abraham, not only to the Jewish nation, but to all who received the knowledge of salvation ; so may we extend the application of the oath sworn unto David to all those spiritual Israelites in whose hearts the spiritual David as Messiah sits enthroned.

What a sure and abiding comfort it should be to God's people that He has sworn by His very Godhead that He will deliver and save them ! Because He could swear by no greater He sware by Himself. Marvellous is it that God should thus act in His dealings with man ! Let us meditate upon this overwhelming subject, till we are overcome with wonder and covered with shame. How is it that we can harbour doubts and misgivings, when we have not only the promise, but the oath of the unchangeable and eternal Jehovah to depend upon ? I feel the responsibility of making this statement, but I feel and therefore say it,—I believe

that one of the greatest sins that man can commit is to doubt the promise of God that He will receive even the vilest who comes to Him through Jesus Christ.

VERSES 36, 37.

His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne
as the sun before me. It shall be esta-
blished for ever as the moon, and as a
faithful witness in heaven.

THESE words declare the perpetuity of Christ's people. They shall endure not for a time merely ; theirs shall not be a transient existence, their leaf shall not wither. How different are the ungodly ! They are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Speaking of the number of this seed St. John writes (Rev. vii. 9), ' After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands.' They are called His seed because they are born of God, for ' every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.' ' Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.'

In this relationship we find a resemblance between Him that begat, and those that are begotten of Him. It is not always that children resemble their parents in features and disposition, but between Christ and His people there is an unmistakable likeness ; for as they have borne the image of the earthly, so now, being born again, they bear the image of the heavenly. But besides this likeness, the relationship between Christ and His people implies a duty ; not the mere servile duty of a slave, but the duty willingly accorded by cheerful, loving, obedient children. And further, this relationship confers honour. Being descended from One higher than the highest, Christ's seed are the true aristocracy ; they are of a royal line, and the blood-royal flows in their veins ; they are all the children of a King, though they may not yet have succeeded to their full inheritance. ' This honour have all his saints.' What a high privilege ! The throne of Christ is to be as the sun, steadfast, glorious, unchanging, and His saints shall reign with Him. Heaven and earth are full of His glory, and this glory is reflected by all His children. Even now, while He is veiled from mortal eyes they bear in their lives and characters some reflection, faint and feeble though it be, of His goodness and beauty, as the moon bears faithful witness to the absent sun ; by-and-by they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is, and

all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image.'

If then such a glorious destiny awaits the children of God, must there not be every provision for their welfare and safety in this present life? If their heavenly Father has prepared such an inheritance for them, will He suffer them to miss their way and fail to reach it? Not so. Even the timid sheep and the fearful bird are bold and daring in defence of their young; and man, if he were not to provide for his own, would be despised and regarded as worse than an infidel: if then the love of offspring belongs even to the beasts that perish, what must be the love of Christ for His seed! Will He not watch, protect, guide, and help them in all circumstances? Will He not supply their every want? Chasten them He may, but only in love and for their good. Die they must, but only to shuffle off this mortal body with its pains and infirmities, its troubles and sins, that they may shine in glory for ever with Him who hath begotten them again from the dead. 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

VERSE 38.

But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou
hast been wroth with thine anointed.

IN contrast to all that is promised in the preceding verses, now comes a description of the actual condition of the king ; the object being, not to upbraid the faithful and true God, whose praise will be ever in the Psalmist's mouth, but to show that the chastisement is complete and has done its work. It becomes us, when we receive His fatherly chastisements, to justify God and judge ourselves.

It would seem, that for a time, the king had been driven from his throne, his strongholds taken away, his enemies victorious in battle, and the days of his youthful vigour cut short. These are the sad complaints the Psalmist pours out, but in the 46th verse he recovers himself, and has recourse to prayer that God would help him.

In verse 33, God says, 'My loving-kindness will I not utterly take away ;' yet the Psalmist says, 'Thou hast cast off and abhorred thine anointed.' Can this be reconciled with the assurance in verse 35, 'I will not lie unto David ?' It is not always possible to see the end of God's dealings with His people. Though He be their God and Saviour, yet sometimes when they pro-

voke Him He hides Himself and suspends His favours. But although His footsteps are not known, we have His pledged word, 'My loving-kindness will I not utterly take away.' 'Although (says Elihu to Job) thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him, therefore trust thou in him.' When God hides His face from His people they are ready to despair, and often conclude that He has entirely cast them off. Nothing can compensate for this loss ; all that the world can offer is of no avail. Their happiness consists in the assurance of His felt presence, and anything that comes between them and their heavenly Father takes from them their only true comfort. But are there not many who are called, like the Psalmist, to pass through this discipline, and who, in consequence, are ready to cry out with Job in bitter anguish, 'Oh, that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord did shine upon me !' Why is this ? Does the Lord willingly afflict His children ? Certainly not : just as an earthly parent from very love is wont to correct and chasten, so our heavenly Father, when He sees needful, uses severe discipline, casting us into the furnace of affliction. For what end ? Let David answer, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word.' Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peace-

able fruits of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.' The brightest saints, if left to themselves, are liable to grow lukewarm, and undervalue God's word and ordinances. Let such bless God, even if He does hide His face from them, for this is the means He takes to purify them, and make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

The Psalmist further complains, 'Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.' This does not seem to agree with verses 20 and 21: the wrath of God in Holy Scripture is generally, if not always, spoken of as descending upon impenitent sinners. It is an attribute which is as it were foreign to Him, in which He delights not; it is 'His strange work,' but 'He delighteth in mercy.' The Psalmist is therefore distressed that God's anointed should be treated as those who wilfully spurn Him, and will have none of His ways. Surely the house of David was at this time (as Matthew Henry says) wofully eclipsed, for what is there worse to endure than the wrath of God? It greatly behoves professing Christians to be watchful against indwelling sin, to pray earnestly to be delivered from anything that may incur God's wrath. God had been pleased with His anointed, but now He was wroth with him.

VERSE 39.

Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant : thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

JEHOVAH had entered into covenant with the family of David, but now, for aught that could be perceived, He had made void the covenant ; not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it : 'Thou hast made void.' The Hebrew word occurs elsewhere only in Lamentations, ii. 7, in which verse, and others of the same chapter, Jeremiah adopts similar language to that used in this psalm. The meaning probably is, 'Thou hast dealt with Thy servant as if there were no such covenant, as if no sure promises had been made to him.' The words cannot be taken literally, for God had said before, 'My covenant will I *not* break,' and 'He is not a man that He should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent.' His word can never fail either in respect to the Church at large, or to particular members of it. After David's day the kingdom was sadly divided ; the people forsook the Lord and went after their idols ; for this they were severely punished, and were suffered to fall into the hands of their enemies, and it seemed as if the throne, and race of David

were about to be cut off for ever, for the Psalmist adds, ‘Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.’ Allusion is probably made to Rehoboam, king of Judah, of whom we read that he forsook the law of the Lord and all Israel with him. As a punishment, God sold him and his people into the hand of Shishak, king of Egypt, who greatly oppressed them. At the preaching of the prophet Shemaiah, the king and the princes of Israel humbled themselves; whereupon the Lord said He would not destroy, but would give them some deliverance. Rehoboam, however, was reduced to vassalage by Shishak. Thus his crown was cast to the ground.

‘Thrones and crowns (says Matthew Henry) are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust; but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ’s spiritual seed, which faileth not away.’ ‘By me kings reign,’ is true now as it ever has been. The Lord reigneth, and is exalted above all kings and potentates: ‘There is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God.’ Look at Nebuchadnezzar; at one time it was said of him, ‘Thou art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto the heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.’ Shortly after we find him driven away to eat grass as the oxen. ‘He putteth down one, and setteth up another.’ After serving the king of Egypt, Re-

hoboam was again restored to his kingdom in Jerusalem ; for we are told, ‘the wrath of the Lord turned from him.’

VERSE 40.

Thou hast broken down all his hedges ; thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.

THIS probably refers to the taking of the fenced cities of Judah by Shishak, recorded in the 2nd book of Chronicles, xii. The reason of this laying waste was, ‘because they had transgressed against the Lord.’

The Jewish people are spoken of in the Bible as a vineyard ; the simile was very expressive, and one that could be well understood. The country of Judæa abounded in vineyards, the soil being favourable to the cultivation of the grape. Much care was spent upon them by the husbandmen, and in order to protect them from the ravages of wild beasts and evil-disposed persons, a strong hedge or fence was made all round, and while this remained they were safe. So with the Israelites : God speaks of them as a vineyard of His own planting, which He takes pleasure in keeping well fenced ; as it is written in Isaiah, v. 2, ‘He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted

it with the choicest vine.' So long as His chosen walked in His ways and kept His commandments they were safe from their enemies ; but when they broke away from their allegiance to Him, they threw down the fence themselves, and once away from His protection 'the enemy came in like a flood.' The cause of their troubles lay at their own door, and yet the Psalmist says, '*Thou hast broken down.*' The privilege was inestimably great (though they too lightly esteemed, and took little advantage of it) that when the rest of the world was nothing else but a waste neglected wilderness, they should be an enclosed vineyard under the long-continued droppings of the sanctuary and dews of heavenly influences ; and it was not till after long provocation that God commanded His clouds to rain no more rain upon it. (John Howe.)

Thus it is with His people now. They are spoken of as under the protection of the Great Husbandman. The world lies in the wilderness unprotected and exposed to the frequent attacks of the enemy of souls, who 'as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' But God takes His people under His special protection. 'Divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and divine providence about their natural life.' Satan said of Job, 'Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath ?' as if he had walked round it to see if he

could find a part unprotected where he might enter, but had failed. Yes, although God's chosen are surrounded by dangers while in this world, He will suffer no real harm to happen to them. In the night of affliction, as well as in the day of prosperity, God will keep them, for does not His word say, 'He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep?' But let them not lay themselves open to temptation, or presumptuously court danger, for it is also written, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

'Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin:' that is, thou hast destroyed his towers and fortifications; they are utterly ruined by the enemy. No human strength or skill is proof against the Almighty. He who sustains the world can bring down them that dwell on high, and lay low the lofty city. If we require proof, we have Babylon, that great city whose walls are described by Herodotus as being three hundred feet high, and seventy-five feet broad, strengthened with two hundred and fifty towers, and having one hundred gates of solid brass. But the glory of this well-fortified city did not last long. Cyrus, according to prophecy, conquered, and finally obtained possession of it by turning the Euphrates out of its course. The destruction of the city is so complete, that a few shapeless mounds of brickwork are the only traces of its vast walls and buildings.

VERSE 41.

All that pass by the way spoil him : he is a reproach to his neighbours.

HIS means of defence being taken away, he is exposed to rapine and plunder ; just as a vineyard so exposed would be liable to the ravages of all wild beasts and robbers. There is a similar allusion in Psalm lxxx. 12, 13, 'Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they that pass by the way do pluck her ? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.' The language is highly figurative, and supposing that Rehoboam be spoken of, it probably means that being himself made tributary, and his fenced cities taken, the whole country was overrun by the enemy. '*All* that pass by.' This is expressive, for we read that the people were without number that came out of Egypt. It was useless to resist such a host : all the treasures of the house of the king, and of the house of God were taken. It is probable that so formidable an army had never before invaded the country. It must have filled the people of Judah with dread, all the more as through their own unfaithfulness they had forfeited the right of looking to the Lord for His protection.

May we not learn from this the important lesson that, once devoid of God's favour, no earthly defence, however strong, can shield us from the enemy's attack? On the other hand, they who trust in Him, and walk humbly in His ways, shall be safe under His protection. No weapon formed against them shall prosper. If we can say with David, 'The Lord is on my side,' we may also add, 'I will not fear what man can do unto me.' The gracious presence of God, His power, His promises, His readiness to hear prayer, the witness of His Spirit in the hearts of His people—in the enjoyment of these blessings, the saints feel that holy security and serenity of mind, in which they dwell at ease.

'He is a reproach to his neighbours.' The word 'neighbours' probably refers to surrounding nations. He is reproached, scorned, derided, as forsaken by God, and given up to his foes; he no longer commands the admiration of mankind as the head of a prosperous, favoured, and happy people; he is treated with contempt, as inspiring no fear, and having nothing to entitle him to respect; and they triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. This dishonour had come upon the king as a divine retribution, for this was the punishment with which God threatened the Israelites before their entrance into Canaan, 'If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord

thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, . . . thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. (Deut. xxviii. 15, 37.) There is one great principle, illustrated by the history of the Jewish people, viz., that while they served the one true God and walked in His laws, they were exalted above all the nations around them, they were honoured and held in awe: but as soon as they fell away, all their glory and prosperity decayed. As with nations, so with individuals: 'Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' May we not apply this lesson to the country in which we live? While Britain remains faithful to her God, and stands by the open Bible; while the Sabbath is hallowed amongst us, and the truth faithfully preached and held out to those who have it not;—so long we may look for God's blessing. Has it not been largely given in times past? Well may we pray that 'truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations.' 'Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.'

VERSE 42.

Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries ; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

GOD seems to take part with the adversaries against His anointed, allowing them to exult and rejoice in oppressing Him ; not only giving them the power, but inclining them to turn their power this way. If the enemies of the Church lift up their hands against it we ought to see God setting up their strength, for they could have no power except it were given them from above ; but when it is thus allowed them, and they are powerful to do mischief, it pleases them : ‘ Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.’

The phrase ‘right hand’ in Scripture often denotes great power, as in Exod. xv. 6 : ‘ Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.’ God’s right hand—His mighty power—is engaged to defend His people, and they find Him ever ready to serve them in times of trouble : ‘ O thou that savest by thy right hand them that trust in thee.’ (Ps. xvii. 7.) Those that trust in Him have many enemies, many that rise up against them and seek their ruin ; but they have one Friend who is

able to deal with them all. As an instance, let us consider the state of the Israelites in Egypt before Moses was sent for their deliverance from bondage; nought but the mighty power of God could have delivered them from Pharaoh's yoke. 'Thy right hand shall find them out that hate thee.' He found them out and overthrew the army of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. We have an account of this in Ps. lxxviii., where the plagues of Egypt are also spoken of. Verse 54 of that Psalm speaks of 'the mountain which his right hand had purchased.' The Canaanites were in full and quiet possession of the land, but God cast them out: not only took away their title to it, as Lord of the whole earth, but Himself executed the judgment given against them, and as Lord of hosts, turned them out of it, and made Israel 'tread upon their high places,' making them dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed; so will it be at the end of this dispensation, when the Lord will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this text the Psalmist complains of the joy of his enemies over his defeat. When God's people fall into trouble, or (as in the case before us) are visited with chastisement for their backsliding, the worldling exults over it. This is the spirit of the Wicked One; for ever since he himself was cast down from heaven, it has been, and ever will

be, his aim and desire to seduce Christians from their allegiance to Christ ; and if he can but succeed he rejoices, and so do all those who are led captive by him at his will. But such pleasure is short-lived, for although for a time a cloud may come betwixt God and His people, it shall in the end pass away, and the believer will find that greater is He that is with him, than all they that are against him.

VERSE 43.

Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,
and hast not made him to stand in the
battle.

THE language of this verse implies that no resistance was made in battle. Such was evidently the case in the Egyptian invasion. The expression does not mean ‘blunted the edge of his sword,’ in our acceptation of the term, but turned back his attack ; so that when the hand was raised to strike, it did not descend on the object aimed at :—Thou makest him to be unsuccessful in battle, and to suffer defeat ; more than this, Thou hast taken away his courage.

‘The spirit of men (says Matthew Henry) is

what the Father and Former of spirits makes it ; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution further than God is pleased to uphold us.'

Goliath defied the armies of Israel time after time, yet he succumbed before the stripling David, armed only with a sling and a stone, showing that the battle was the Lord's : 'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield (in thine own strength) ; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.' Elijah when sustained by Divine strength could stand before the prophets of Baal, and before Ahab, king of Israel himself ; but very soon after we find him fleeing from Jezebel, who had threatened his life. Surely there is enough in God, and in the revelations He has made of Himself, to make His people easy at all times, even in the most difficult and trying seasons. His name is a strong tower for them, in which they may take refuge when pursued, where they shall be lifted up above their enemies, and fortified against their attacks. Whose power or anger should *he* fear who knows and feels that God is on his side, the light of whose countenance is life, and who by one smile can disperse the darkest cloud, and with one word can calm the most stormy tempest ?

But 'Thou hast *not* made him to stand in the battle.' How was this ? The cause is soon found.

God had not forsaken His servant, but was fulfilling the word that He spake to David in 2 Sam. vii. 14: 'If he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.' David could say, 'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;' he knew well that He who controls the mighty had him under His special care. In the case of Rehoboam it was different: he had departed from serving the God of his fathers, and had gone after idols; when therefore, the country was invaded by the Egyptian king, and Rehoboam and his people joined battle, to whom could he apply for help? Not to the Lord of Hosts, whose service he had forsaken, and whose help and guidance he had thereby forfeited. This was the time to show the utter folly of trusting to idols, and thus leaning on a broken staff, for what could they do? The prophets of Baal cried 'from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered.' Therefore Rehoboam was left at the mercy of his foes, he was driven back and his forces fled.

Let us apply this to ourselves. We, too, have bitter foes to contend against. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high

places.' Unseen they are, it is true, but none the less real. They are led on by one who is ever restless, and who never ceases his endeavours to conquer. To whom are we looking for succour in this warfare? One there is who will impart such needful strength as we require, and who can arrest the enemy in his fiercest rage. To Him let us flee in the hour of danger, and follow Him closely at all times. Let us 'take unto us the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Let us be prayerful, and circumspect, and vigilant; lest in this spiritual battle we be left to the mercy of our foes. The doom of Satan's captives is slavery and eternal death; but to those who overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, shall be given a crown of life, an inheritance of glory that fadeth not.

VERSE 44.

Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast
his throne down to the ground.

FOR 'glory' the word in the margin of our Bible is 'brightness.' This is the original meaning. Luther translates it, 'Thou destroyest his purity.'

The expression is peculiar : it implies that the king had contracted defilement, had been subjected to treatment which degraded him ; the splendour and magnificence connected with his rank had been destroyed. This was true of Rehoboam : from a high pinnacle of fame and distinction he was brought low and reduced to vassalage. The same is related of other kings of Judah, as, for instance, Jeconiah, or Coniah, of whom it is recorded that he was taken captive in the eighth year of his reign by Nebuchadnezzar, who also carried away all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the king's house ; and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon had made in the temple of the Lord. The Psalmist says, '*Thou hast done this.*' Nebuchadnezzar could have had no power against Coniah, nor Shishak against Rehoboam, had it not been given them from above. The God that 'removeth kings, and setteth up kings,' He alone has absolute control over all the sovereigns of the earth, to place on the throne whom He will, and to remove them when He will. Even the renowned king of Babylon was brought to recognise this when he said, 'The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' This claim is often asserted for God in the Scriptures as a proof of His supremacy and greatness : 'For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, for

God is the judge ; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.' He claimed absolute control over Sennacherib, to employ him at His pleasure in executing His purposes of chastisement on the Hebrew nation (Isa. x. 5-7) ; and also over Cyrus, appointing him to execute His judgments upon Babylon, and to restore His people to their land. (Isa. xlvi. 1.) Doubtless God has some end to accomplish in the development of His great plans in the case of each one who has ever occupied a throne. In the case of Rehoboam we find that his captivity led to his repentance. The prophet She-maiah appeared, and delivered to the king and his princes this short, but emphatic message, 'Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.' At this they were conscience-stricken ; they admitted the justice of the punishment they had brought upon themselves, and they humbled themselves and said, 'The Lord is righteous.' This humiliation was graciously received, and we read that they were spared some portion of the ignominy they had incurred : 'Therefore I will not destroy them, but will grant them some deliverance.' (2 Chron. xii.)

VERSE 45.

The days of his youth hast thou shortened :
thou hast covered him with shame.

The Psalmist in this verse complains of the cutting short of the king's youthful vigour, not of the shortening of his life ; his hopes and prospects had suddenly vanished, and the feelings of age—the cutting off from the world—had come upon him before he had reached the season when this might be expected to occur. Rehoboam was but forty-six years old when the ruin fell upon him : he survived it but twelve years. Jehoiachin too, and Zedekiah, were but thirty years old when they were carried captive to Babylon ; so that to whomsoever the verse may refer, the complaint of Job might fitly become him, and would doubtless be wrung from him, ‘Oh, that I were as in months past ;—as I was in the days of my youth.’ Those who prosper in their youth know not what dark and cloudy days are before them ; let not the strong man, therefore, glory in his own strength. The only safe plan is to dedicate our youth to God, to give Him the best of our days, to devote all our talents to His service. This was the royal preacher's application of all he had said concerning the vanity of the world and its pleasures,

'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.' If love to God, and a desire to walk closely with Him, grow with our growth, and increase with our strength, then we can boldly face all that lies before us in the way of trial or temptation ; nor will the years ever come when we shall say, 'I have no pleasure in them ;' for in God's service is abiding satisfaction, and in His presence, felt, though unseen, is fulness of joy. One of the blessings promised to the man who finds wisdom and understanding, is length of days ; and they who seek God early shall find Him, and enjoy the blessing of His love. What can they want more ? What need they fear, and what may they not hope for, who are loved by such a God, and such a Father ?

'Thou hast covered him with shame.' Everything in his condition and in his appearance indicates shame and disgrace and the Divine displeasure. Surely a man must be reduced to that condition when he can say of his days, 'I have no pleasure in them.' We can hardly conceive a position more sad and shameful than that of a man, who, by his own sin and folly, has fallen from the pinnacle of affluence and honour, into the lowest depths of misery. 'His sun has gone down while it was yet day.' We may imagine the king

in his trouble, mourning over the past days of his splendour, and groaning under the sense of helplessness and inability to utilise the powers of mind and body, which, being yet in his prime, he would possess in a high degree. Like Job, he would be ready to cry out, ‘Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.’ The inference we may draw from 2 Chron. xii. 12, is, that, if Rehoboam be here meant, the language of David was his; ‘Lord, remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.’ God, in His all-wise dealings with His children, sometimes sees fit to cast them into the furnace of affliction for the purpose of bringing their former guilt to their remembrance, and leading them to repentance. Thus Jonah, who had fled from the presence of the Lord, learned his sin and folly when he prayed to Him out of the fish’s belly, and said, ‘I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, unto thine holy temple.’ Many who pray not at all (or at least only as a mere form) when they are in prosperity, are brought to cry unto God by reason of affliction. Happy they who learn the lesson that such dispensations are meant to teach, who can say with sincerity, ‘I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.’ Although this discipline

is not joyous, but on the contrary grievous, let us be thankful that we are made the subjects of it, for ‘whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth.’ Who would not rather suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, knowing what the end of both shall be? ‘Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.’ This is the doom of the worldling; but the children of God can say in their deepest trouble, ‘Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’

VERSE 46.

How long, Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

As diamond cuts diamond, so Scripture explains Scripture. We shall best find out the meaning of these words by laying them side by side with similar passages. ‘How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?’ Now we know that a person shows his anger by his words and by his looks, and therefore we have frequently the expression, ‘How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?’ Though the word ‘face’

does not occur in this passage, yet we know that this is what the Psalmist means. It is in the face that we manifest love or anger, approbation or dislike. If we approve a man's action we show it in the expression of the countenance, and so also in disapproval we withdraw our countenance from him. Even thus does God act when we merit His displeasure ; He conceals His face, suspends His expressions of love, withdraws the communications of His grace, and shuts up His lovingkindness. God may hide Himself upon two grounds ; He may do it as a matter of justice, and as an act of sovereignty. When His people walk carelessly, conform to the spirit of the world, undervalue God's word and ordinances, prefer the trifles of time to the things of eternity, then God as a parent shows His disapproval of the child who does not give to Him the obedience that He demands. The reasons for the withdrawal of His countenance may not always be vouchsafed to us, as we see from Isaiah, xlvi. 14, 15, 'Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.' The reason why He does so originates in His own mind. We can see that one good reason is to convince us of our utter helplessness, and our absolute dependence upon Him. As the manna, though angels' food, if kept too long bred worms, so spiritual privileges constantly possessed, if unused, lose their value, or turn away the heart from the Giver. But

for whatever reason God hides His face from His servants, they regard it as the greatest trial to be dreaded ; their language is like that of David, ‘Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.’ Nothing can compensate for the withdrawal of God’s favour. As all the stars in the firmament, however brightly they shine, cannot make up for the absence of the sun, so not all the advantages of this world can make up for the absence of God from the soul. ‘The children of God value one gleam from their Father’s countenance more than all the world’s wealth.’—Archbp. Leighton.

But the manner in which the question is asked implies that God’s withdrawal of Himself from His people is but transient : ‘Lord, how long?’ We see that it is so from David’s experience. How often does he begin a psalm in the language of complaint, and end it in that of triumph! For example, Psalm lxxvii. which begins in trouble and anxiety, ‘I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me,’ finishes with the greatest confidence, ‘Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.’ But we gather it more especially from God’s own declaration (Isaiah, liv. 7, 8) : ‘For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith

the Lord thy Redeemer.' How graciously does God speak that He may not be mistaken! 'But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' Why then does God hide Himself from His people? It is for their good, to convince them of their utter helplessness without Him; to show them that the means of grace do not necessarily in themselves convey grace, and to stimulate their desires after the unclouded and uninterrupted vision of His face. As the grapes of Eshcol, tasted by the Israelites in the wilderness, would create a longing for the good things of the land to which they were hastening, so the dealings of heaven will quicken their desires after heaven, where they shall see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face, and where they shall know even as they are known.

Once more: when God hides His face from us, we have the same experience as His dear Son. Our Lord said, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In this respect we must have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and drink of His cup. 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.' (Heb. v. 8.) We see the same thing in the experience of all God's people. Job exclaims, 'O, that I knew

where I might find him!' Yet he had most undoubting faith: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;' 'In my flesh shall I see God.' David also chides himself: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

St. Paul's words, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,' also seem to bear out this conception. This is the anger of a loving and indulgent Father to bring his erring child to a sense of duty. This does not burn like fire for ever, but just for a moment. In a little wrath He hides His face: 'He retaineth not his anger for ever,' but only long enough to show it; and when David was tempted to speak otherwise, and to inquire, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?' he was constrained to conclude, 'This is my infirmity.' In another place he calls upon God's saints to 'give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.' Why? 'For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

VERSE 47.

Remember how short my time is : wherefore
hast thou made all men in vain ?

HERE observe two things : (1) the change of the pronoun from the third to the first, and (2) that this is a question asked.

(1.) The Psalmist here seems to personate the family of David, or one of the princes of that line, whose glory now seemed to be extinguished. Ethan, the Ezrahite (see title of this psalm), was a descendant of Judah, and was contemporary with Solomon (1 Kings, iv. 31); it is highly probable that he outlived him, and consequently witnessed the decadence of Solomon's glory, the distraction of the kingdom, the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam, who was his powerful adversary (2 Chron. x.), the invasion of the country, and spoiling of Jerusalem by Shishak, king of Egypt. (1 Kings, xiv. 25, 26.) Some refer this psalm to a later period, viz., that of the Babylonish captivity, when the family of David was entirely dethroned, and the promise of God seemed to be made void. But if it were written at so late a period, no reason can possibly be given why it was ascribed to Ethan the Ezrahite, and there is no internal evidence that it

was written by him. (See Scott.) The reigns of David and Solomon were only about forty years each (1 Kings, ii. 11; xi. 42), and the short glimpse of Israel's prosperity then passed away; therefore the glory of their kingdom would be very transient if it were thus to terminate. It would seem almost to have been in vain. Under these circumstances it was natural for the Psalmist to personate the house of David, and lament the sad change, as he does in the latter part of this psalm.

(2.) 'Remember how short my time is; wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?'

We can readily conceive this to be the language of a dispirited, but sanguine character, who feels bitterly so great a reverse of fortune, but who yet hopes to witness its restoration. This, we may observe, is not a declaration, but an interrogation, and one quite in keeping with the Jewish character. It savours of impatience and despondency, like the one in the preceding verse. 'Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?' No, Ethan, He has not made all men in vain (Prov. xvi. 4), nor anything in vain (Rev. iv. 11); neither are His promises nor His threatenings made in vain, and there is nothing in your present state of humiliation contrary to His covenant engagements, or to your just expectations. You forget the articles of the covenant. The Lord indeed made a faithful oath unto David, 'Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne'; this

part of the covenant you will doubtless remember, as also that which relates to its perpetuity ; but have you forgotten the rod, and the stripes ? (See verses, 30-32.) But if *you* have forgotten them, *I* have not, and cannot. You have sinned, and I have chastised, and will chastise, not only with dethronement, but with captivity. I am constrained to do this, both by my honour and by my holiness, for, ‘ Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth ; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.’ (Amos, ix. 8.) As, however, there is a great difference between a sword and a rod, so have I observed a difference between my judgments upon others, and my chastisements upon you ; they are cut off (Ps. xlvi. 8), but you remain the monuments of my faithfulness (Ezek. vi. 10), to smart for, and lament your folly and disobedience, and also to experience my goodness and truth. ‘ For thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth ; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them.’ (Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26.)

VERSE 48.

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death ? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave ?

THE Psalmist still interrogates, as though the foundations were removed, and the Lord were not in His holy temple ; as though because He was unable to see the end of the present distresses, there would therefore be no end. He sees and laments that his time is short, and that the devouring grave is ready to receive all ; but surely he had, as we say, forgotten his catechism, for though Ethan may die, and leave the Church and State under a cloud, and though all the sons of Adam lie under sentence of death, yet the Lord will provide, and fulfil His large promises to their fullest extent ; for in the second Adam there is more than hope, for all this. In such dark surmises Ethan had forgotten two things ; (1) that God is faithful, and (2) that He had not undertaken more than He would perform.

The subject spoken of in this verse is one of individual importance : 'What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death ?' We sometimes hear persons speak of death as a debt due to

nature, but this is an error ; man dies by statute. 'The body is dead because of sin.' (Rom. viii. 10.) Therefore death is not a debt due to nature, but is a judicial and penal infliction : 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' (Rom. v. 12.) These statements are the best commentary on the original sentence, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' This sentence was addressed to Adam, not as a private person, but as the federal head and representative of the whole human family, and therefore all are involved in it. Adam died, and Methuselah died ; 'Your fathers, where are they ? and do the prophets live for ever ?' (Zech. i. 5.)

The law of mortality had, however, been suspended in two instances ; that of Enoch before the flood, and that of Elijah 2120 years later. In whatever way the living saints may pass into heaven, a change analogous to death and the resurrection must pass upon them. (1 Thess. iv. 17.) Death is therefore called 'the way of all the earth' (Joshua, xxiii. 14), and the grave, 'The house appointed for all living.' (Job, xxx. 23.) Death is also called 'the king of terrors' (Job, xviii. 14), because all men are naturally afraid of him. The subject of death is one that we are all familiar with, and this very familiarity often hinders its salutary influence upon us. 'The living know that they

must die' (Eccles. ix. 5); hence we constantly hear the phrase 'as sure as death ;' and yet to show how little people think of it or prepare for it, there is another current saying, 'I thought no more of it than my dying day.' The fact is, there is in us by nature a secret conceit of immortality, and we can hardly be beaten out of it ; we can see death on every man's brow, but our own ; hence it has been said, 'All men think all men mortal, but themselves.' But the decree is inexorable : 'There is no man (writes the Preacher) that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death : and there is no discharge in that war ; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it' (Eccles. viii. 8.) Man, after all his efforts to make himself independent of God, cannot retain his life a single moment beyond the time appointed. Nothing can be plainer than this ; when the Father of spirits calls our spirit, it must go that moment, it is to no purpose to dispute it, either by arms or argument, either ourselves or our friends for us. We cannot escape out of the jurisdiction of death, or find any place where its writs do not come. This is absolute ; it applies to all, kings and subjects, high and low, rich and poor. The wicked may imagine that they have made a covenant with death, but God will annul it. (Isa. xxviii. 18.) 'Shall they escape by iniquity ?' says the Psalmist. Wicked men now often evade or

outface the justice of magistrates and the vigilance of officers, but they cannot impose upon this ‘king of terrors.’ The most subtle cheat cannot outwit death, nor can the most impudent outbrave it. Nay, so far from wickedness being able to deliver from death those that are given to it, it will rather deliver them up to death, and after that the second death.

‘What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?’ A dislike of death is no proof of the want of real piety, for the fear of death is inherent in us. Adam had it even in a state of innocence, otherwise the words, ‘Thou shalt surely die,’ would have been no threat. We have to die; but death to the Christian is only a passing from this world into the presence of his Saviour; hence it is called a ‘departure,’ a sleep. We have to die; but the Christian has not to pass through the dark valley alone; the Good Shepherd has promised to be with him there, comforting and supporting him, and the promise is sure: ‘This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.’ (Ps. xlvi. 14.) ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’

VERSE 49.

Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses,
which thou swarest unto David in thy
truth ?

INTIMACY and holy familiarity are among the privileges of the children of God ; for they have not the spirit of bondage, but of adoption, whereby they cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ (Rom. viii. 15.) ‘This honour have all his saints.’ (Ps. cxlix. 9.) I do not say that this privilege is not sometimes exceeded, or that His people do not sometimes speak unwisely, as instances will occur to every student of Scripture ; nevertheless, the privilege remains. The Psalmist here filially and familiarly asks, ‘Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth ?’ From a tone of despondency he now rises to one of confidence which he maintains to the end of the psalm. This is a question of great importance, significance, and delicacy. First we will notice *what* these loving-kindnesses are (Ethan knew them well), and in the next place we will resolve his question as to *where* the ‘former lovingkindnesses’ are. They are called in Isa. lv. 3, ‘The sure mercies of David,’ and also in Acts, xiii. 34. Solomon concludes his prayer at

the dedication of the temple by a reference to them, 'Remember the mercies of David thy servant.' (2 Chron. vi. 42.) But what are they? They are the things inviolably secured by the promise and oath of God to David, viz.: that He would establish David and his posterity upon the throne of Israel for ever; which was a special favour not granted to Moses, Joshua, or any of David's predecessors. (2 Sam. vii. 8-29.) Observe particularly in the 20th verse of this psalm, God asserting two things (1) His having found David; for the people did not find him, nor the elders, nor the prophet Samuel, but God only. (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 6-13.) He found him twice; first, among his ewes, and of a shepherd made him a king; secondly, among his enemies, in danger of losing his crown and his life. Having found him (2) He anointed him with His holy oil. He then entered into a solemn league with him; for it is not a bare promise: 'I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.' This part of the covenant, you observe, establishes the perpetuity of the kingdom in his family; to be consummated in the everlasting kingdom of the greater Son of David. (Ps. ii. lxxii. lxxxix.; and Luke, i. 32. 33.) But there are other articles in this covenant, viz.: two 'shallss' (verse 21) two 'shall nots' (verse 22) two 'wills' (verse 23). 'My

hand *shall* hold him fast, and my arm *shall* strengthen him. The enemy *shall not* be able to do him violence ; the son of wickedness *shall not* hurt him. I *will* smite down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.' (See Prayer-book version, verses 22, 23, 24.) These words imply that there would be foul work, and here are two *adversaries* making towards him, (1) 'the enemy,' and (2) 'the son of wickedness,' viz., both open and secret enemies, who would offer violence and hurt. It was from the latter kind that David suffered most. Only twice was he in danger from an open enemy, viz.: Ishbi-benob, the son of a giant (2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17), and Ishbosheth, the son of Saul. (2 Sam. iv. 8.) His great dangers were from 'the sons of wickedness ;' his wicked son Absalom, and his wicked counsellor, Ahithophel. (See David's complaint, Ps. lv. 12-15, Prayer-book version.) There was, however, no real hurt to David; there was hurt only to his enemies. True, after the death of Solomon, the glory was in some measure eclipsed by the revolt of the ten tribes, but for about 400 years his descendants sat on the throne in lineal succession, viz. till the captivity ; as the Lord, by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, had said that David, His servant, should always have a light before Him in Jerusalem. (1 Kings, xi. 36.)

God, indeed, punished the sin of Solomon, but

there were three alleviations of the judgments denounced, viz. (1) they were not to happen in his days, (2) the whole kingdom would not be taken from his posterity, and (3) the affliction was not to be for ever; ‘I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.’ (1 Kings, xi. 39.) And though after the captivity the Asmoneans ruled (who were of the tribe of Levi), and afterwards Herod the Idumean, yet the family of David never lost the right and title to the sceptre. As David’s sheep-hook had been turned into a sceptre, so, for a time, the sceptre had become a hatchet. (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark, vi. 3.) Nevertheless, the hatchet will again become a sceptre, and will be resumed by Jesus, the lineal descendant, and ‘Branch’ of the family. (Isa. xi. 1, 10.)

Having now pointed out the important significance of the question, and the meaning of the ‘old,’ or former ‘lovingkindnesses,’ let us in the second place resolve Ethan’s question, ‘Where are they?’ They are where they ever were, in safe keeping, and will be brought out again in due time, in all their freshness. The Jews now without a sceptre and without a prince, will ere long be gathered together, as we read, ‘Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.’ (Hosea, iii. 5; Ezek. xxxiv. 24)

It may indeed seem as though God's loving-kindnesses were clean gone. Look at the heavens on a clear, unclouded night, and you see a multitude of stars ; look again when the sky is shrouded in gloom, and not a star is visible. Do you ask, 'Where are the stars ?' They are still in the sky, though at present hidden from your gaze ; another night when there is not a cloud to intercept the view, they will all be seen again. So with God's loving-kindnesses to Israel. At present we cannot see them, but by-and-by the clouds will be dispersed, and then they will shine forth in all their former fulness. (Jer. xxxiii. 19-26; Rom. xi. 26, 27.)

VERSES 50, 51.

Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants ; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people ; where-with thine enemies have reproached, O Lord ; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

OBSERVE the singular number again ; Ethan personating the royal house of David. My heart is burdened and swelled with grief caused by the scornful taunts and jests of our enemies.

The inviolable veracity and faithfulness of God has been in all ages the terror of the wicked, and the source of the strongest consolation to the children of God. Men mislead men, falsify their word to the great stain of their reputation ; but ‘God is not a man, that *he* should lie ; nor the son of man, that *he* should repent.’ Yea, sooner shall the stars fall from their orbits, and the ponderous mountains be heaved from their foundations than one tittle of His sacred word fail. ‘The word of our God shall stand for ever.’ (Isaiah, xl. 8.) We find this conviction predominant in the Old Testament worthies ; as, for instance, Moses, Joshua, the Prophets ; whenever they have wanted to bring any matter to a crisis, they have instinctively known how to do it ; they have simply reminded God of His promises, and this course has always succeeded. Witness Moses, Exodus, xxxii. 13, 14 ; Numbers, xiv. 15-20.

Ethan had just reminded God of His promises to the house of David, and now he begins to urge (as he conceives) powerful reasons why there should be no further postponement of them. For similar instances of this kind of pleading with God, see also Psalm lxxiv. 20; Nehemiah, i. 8-10 ; Micah, vii. 20.

Doubtless there are times (as Bishop Horne observes) when the trumpets of the adversary and the afflictions of the Church tempt men to think

that the eye of Providence is closed or turned away, and that the Almighty hath ceased to remember their sad estate. But the truth is, that God only giveth His people an opportunity of feeling their own insufficiency, and waiteth till by fervent and importunate prayer they solicit His help. For so the holy Jesus slept while the ship was covered with the waves ; until, awakened by the cries of His disciples, He arose to their assistance, and spoke the tempest to a perfect calm.

‘Thine enemies have blasphemed thee, and slandered the footsteps of thine anointed ;’ that is, their insolent blasphemies are directed against Thee, and they ridicule the very idea of returning prosperity to the house of David, and of the Messiah descending from him. They have uttered malicious and false reports against Thine anointed, to tarnish and impair his reputation ; they have aspersed and vilified him ; they have examined every part of his conduct in order to find matter for accusation ; they have overlooked all his eminent services to his country ; they have aggravated every slip, and misrepresented every action ; ‘they have pursued the footsteps of thine anointed with revilings,’ or (according to the Chaldee) ‘mocked at the tardy advent of the Messiah.’ (Bishop Horne.)

In like manner the rulers and chief priests of the Jews watched the footsteps of our Lord, David’s

greater Son and Antitype. ‘They brought false witnesses to put him to death.’ Both Herod and Pontius Pilate agreed in setting Him at nought. They reviled Him on the cross ; thus did He ‘bear the reproach of all the mighty people,’ who slandered the footsteps of the Lord’s anointed. Ethan, therefore, earnestly pleads, ‘Remember, O Lord, remember that David is thine anointed, and that this is thine own cause.’

VERSE 52.

Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen,
and Amen.

Ethan has now concluded his lament and petition, and so well satisfied is he with the sure results that he breaks out into a thanksgiving. And well he might, for all the traitorous opposers of the house of David, and especially of the glorious ‘Branch,’ shall in due time be brought to deserved shame and condign punishment ; for so it is written : ‘As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame ; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.’ (Psalm cxxxii. 18.)

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